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SEEING the INVISIBLE

SEEING the INVISIBLE

by

HAROLD COOKE PHILLIPS

With an Introduction by

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK



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Seeing the Invisible

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I-K

To

Charles Hastings Dodd

Teacher and Friend

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Preface

The word "invisible" is used in this book to denote those aspects of reality which, because they escape our physical senses, sometimes escape us. However we may define it, religion is rooted in man's relationship to the unseen. This little book of sermons endeavors to discuss some of the implications of this truth. Although these sermons deal with a variety of subjects, an attempt has been made to relate each one to the development of this theme. It is hoped that the book will thus have a unity of purpose and definiteness of aim.

I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to my associate, the Reverend Raymond C. Burns, and to Miss Mary E. Adams, church editor, for valuable suggestions. I am also indebted to my secretary, Mrs. Janet Nesbett, for her faithful work on the manuscript.

HAROLD C. PHILLIPS

Cleveland, Ohio
September, 1931

Introduction

Sermons, like showers of rain, are meant to refresh a country-side and then be forgotten save as they fulfil their purpose in flowers and fruit. The endeavor, therefore, to preserve a sermon in printed form is artificial and never can perfectly succeed. Two major factors in great sermons—the living preacher and the living audience—are absent from the page, and this makes a published volume of sermons almost like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

Nevertheless, while the reader of sermons must recognize this limitation if he is to read them fairly, and in some measure must imaginatively supply the lack if he is to understand them at all, the essence of the message can stand clear upon the printed page. Dr. Phillips, in this volume, has given us thus the privilege of seeing into his mind and catching some of the major emphases of his Christian teaching. Only those who have listened to him will fully understand how he can make a sentence which lies cold in print kindle and flame out when he delivers it. Words our eyes run swiftly over he lifted up and brought down like pile-drivers to force home his truth. Paragraphs that we get the bare sense of were in his pulpit wistful and brooding or fiery and terrific. Nevertheless, the sense is here and noble sense it is—like a good sword now laid under a glass case, which, when flashing in battle, had in it swiftness and leadership and execution that our imaginations must supply.

Dr. Phillips was born in the Island of Jamaica in November 1892, graduated from Denison University in 1919, and

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received his degree in theology at the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in 1922. After an initial and successful pastorate in Mount Vernon, New York, he went to the First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Ohio, where, despite constant solicitation to go elsewhere, he still remains.

His preaching speaks for itself—clear, straightforward talking to real people about real problems; deeply religious with the soul of a mystic and the ethical interests of a prophet behind it; and withal gentle, human, winsome, persuasive. What cannot be put down on paper, however, is, after all, the strongest element in Dr. Phillips' preaching, namely himself.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

The Riverside Church,
New York, N. Y.

The ROCK that is HIGHER

"For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

—Hebrews 11:27.

*"Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things."*

—WORDSWORTH.

I

"Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

—Psalms LXI:2.

There are certain texts that epitomize the essentials of faith. They say much in few words. They are concise but complete. It is such a text that provides the initial thought for the theme that this book of sermons seeks to develop. The words are found in the Sixty-first Psalm at the second verse—"Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

The Psalmist is unquestionably passing through some deep experience. He is deeply stirred. His heart is overwhelmed. And he prays to be led to the rock that is higher than man.

As a matter of fact, it does not take much to overwhelm us. Those who have visited the tropics have perhaps been impressed by the suddenness with which Nature changes her appearance. Sometimes I have looked up at a tropical sky, as clear and as blue as the ocean above which it arches, when, lo! a cloud would appear, the sky become overcast, black, hovering clouds gather about the hilltops, thunder peal out through the quiet valleys, and vicious lightning cleave the sky. And often, as I have observed such a sudden transfiguration of Nature, it has occurred to me that just as quickly and as easily do we become overwhelmed. The very superior sensitiveness of our nature exposes us to influences that go unnoticed by the rest of the creation. Our capacity for laughter but reveals our capacity for tears. The experience of triumph that comes as from some Mount of Transfiguration when we say, "It is good for us to be

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here," brings with it the converse experience of standing in some lonely garden at night and saying with the Master, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful."

Happy is that individual who, when he faces such experiences, can say with the Psalmist: "Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

Now there are two or three truths expressed in this prayer which need reiteration in view of certain current tendencies in religious thinking. First the writer believes there is objective reality to his religious experience. There is a rock. Second, he conceives it as being higher than man. Finally he prays to be led to it. Any man who believes those three things, and acts on his belief, never mind what else he may or may not believe, is a religious man. He has in his heart the heart of religion.

First there is a Rock. There is something objectively real in our religious life and experience. "There is no room for argument here: religion may be mistaken, but at least it knows its own mind." My brother relates the following experience he once had on a visit to the island of Jamaica. He was anxious to show a friend the Blue Mountains which greet one as he approaches the island. With his friend he went on deck early in the morning, but the clouds had completely covered the peaks. He knew, however, that behind the clouds was something real, and insisted that his friend should keep looking in the direction in which he was pointing. Soon there was a rift in the clouds and the mountains appeared. As Tagore puts it,

"The mountain remains unmoved
at its seeming defeat by the mist."

That, as it seems to me, is the first essential of our faith. There is something objectively real behind the earth-born clouds.

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Of course it is precisely this faith that is being challenged today by a growing number of modern thinkers. The battle-ground of Christian faith has shifted from time to time. Once, for example, the Bible was the issue. Men rested their faith on its verbal infallibility. The importance of the Bible no sensible man can gainsay, but that battle line seems now to be deserted. The Bible is not the issue in the modern world. Similarly, the creeds were once regarded as the essential thing in religion. Surely they are important records of mankind's religious development. But to make their verbal acceptance the issue today is to fight a sham battle. The battle-ground was once the person of Christ. "Is Jesus divine?" men asked. "Is he the Son of God?" Few questions are as important. Let me not be misunderstood when I suggest that even that is not the issue today. What men are asking today is not, "Is Jesus the Son of God?", but rather, "Is there any God of whom he could be the Son?" After all, there is only one major problem in religion, or, indeed, in life itself, namely, "Is God objectively real, or merely a convenient concept that we have created?" "Is there any reality behind the earth-born clouds?" This is the issue that now engages us. No other is so vital.

To be sure this line has seen battle before. Nietzsche in one of his tales describes Zarathustra as coming down from the mountain and meeting an old man in a forest. The old man tells him that he is making and singing hymns to God, and when the old man departs, Zarathustra says: "Can it be possible! The old saint in the forest hath not yet heard of it, that God is dead!"

Now one cannot speak in utter belittlement of Non-Theistic Humanism. Writers on this subject cannot be dismissed as if they were a group of misguided ignoramuses. Many of them disclose a breadth of culture and a depth of reverence that elicit respect. Moreover, their emphasis upon the ethical element in human life is one

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which many professed believers in God would do well to take to heart. One merely wants to point out that a religion without God is hardly the kind that will permanently satisfy or sustain the human heart. If the endless literature of man's religious progress proves anything, it certainly supports this observation. For there are experiences, and those the most profound, when men do need "the power to live beyond the terminals of their own day's journeys." For that power, man has instinctively looked beyond himself.

To be sure, we can sally forth single-handed to meet life. Mr. Henley gives us a fine example of this. Perhaps his heart was overwhelmed when he wrote *Invictus*. In it no doubt he voices the spirit of the Humanist. There is no help outside of man. Man is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. He stands with head "bloody but unbowed," a solitary soul, defying a heartless universe.

Now it may be a mark of courage to defy the universe, but it is not the part of wisdom to do so. The battle is lost before it is begun. Men of deepest insight have found a more excellent way. They battle, armed with the shield of faith; the faith that the universe is not heartless or indifferent, but purposeful and responsive. Their attitude is not defiance or submission, but coöperation. Their experience has found classic expression in such incomparable words as these, "The Eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the Everlasting Arms."

The examples of this attitude are as vast as the record of Christian experience. Consider Calvin. Once his heart was overwhelmed. Death had taken his wife. He did not write *Invictus*. Rather he wrote to his friend, William Farrell. This is what he said: "I went to a secret place to pray. . . . May the Lord . . . strengthen you by his spirit, and may he support me also under the heavy affliction which would certainly have overcome me had not He who

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raises up the prostrate, strengthens the weak, and refreshes the weary, stretched forth his hand from heaven to me."

It is not that Calvin, and countless others like him, lack courage. It is rather this, that when one faces life with faith in God, the experiences that come assume a meaning or purpose that not only ennobles the individual, but makes him socially creative. As Dr. William Adams Brown truly writes: "Explain it as we may, there is something in religious faith which can put a meaning into the inexplicable and find a joy in the intolerable." Courage alone, for instance, could never account for Calvary. This is not a picture of a solitary soul defying the universe. It is rather the picture of a man appealing to what is deepest in the universe, and expressing his faith in what he believes is there. A courage, therefore, that lacks the insight of faith and the impulse of love may be quite void of any ultimate meaning—in fact, our apparent braggadocio may be merely "an inverted type of self-pity."

But if a religion without God will not satisfy our deepest needs, neither will it permanently sustain our moral efforts. We are being constantly reminded that morality can stand on its own feet, and has a significance quite independent of divine sanction. To be sure, morality can stand on its own feet, but if it stands, it stands on something. No one would deny that our moral insight is the finest fruit that grows on life's tree. But trees suspended in midair do not bear fruit. They are rooted. As one contemplates the endless moral struggle of mankind through the centuries, he is assured that man's moral effort is rooted and grounded in his faith in God. One feels, therefore, that to lose faith in God is to deprive morality of its cosmic significance. In time it will be no longer compelling. Like the tree pulled out of the soil, it will die because it is not grounded.

Such considerations keep alive our faith in God. As an Indian teacher of the sixteenth century puts it, "The wor-

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ship of the Impersonal laid no hold upon my heart." There is a Rock objectively real. There is substance in the things hoped for. If our religion is only a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected, the vision will pall. We grow tired of looking at ourselves, never mind how good-looking we may think we are.

But notice in the second place that the Rock is, in the thought of the writer, not only real, but it is higher than man. There would really not be much use in being led to it were it not higher than man. Henry Drummond once said, "When the outlook is bad, try the uplook!" That is the meaning of worship and of prayer. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." This is another of the deep-seated needs that faith in God supplies. Contrast is absolutely essential for vital religion. As one has said, "My God, like me as He may be, must be also unlike me. Myself multiplied to the n th power is not a religious idea."

Dean W. L. Sperry reminds us that during the Long Parliament, a party arose in the English army known as the "Levellers." The object of the party, as its name suggests, was "to level all ranks and to establish equality of titles and estates through the realm." This, as he has well suggested, is one of the great weaknesses of Humanism. It destroys the contrast without which real religion cannot live. There is nothing higher than man. Man is the master of his fate, but there is nothing that masters him. All is outlook. There is no uplook. Mr. Sullivan in a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly* is not unfair when he describes this as "a religion with its head cut off, which rises no higher than the resolutions of a philanthropic committee." That religion will not suffice.

Now let it be emphatically stated that this is no matter of "academic irrelevance" with which we are dealing, but

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rather one that has the most practical bearing on human life. One can perhaps understand how a man, as he contemplates this modern universe with its bewildering vastness, and the apparent indifference of physical forces to our ideals and aspirations, may question the truth of God's reality. Mr. Bertram Russell, to cite but one example, does so in that beautifully written obituary, *A Free Man's Worship*. But what one cannot understand is the failure of many of our modern writers to sense the unspeakable loss that would result from our loss of faith in God. To fail to see this is to fail to realize that man's claim to greatness has never rested upon his achievements *per se*, but rather on his relationship to a power greater, higher than himself. Let me illustrate.

There are two pictures from the Old Testament which I always associate together—one the ladder of Bethel, the other the tower of Babel. Both reveal man's claim to greatness, but from different angles. In one instance we see a solitary traveler beneath the Syrian sky. He is frightfully conscious of his moral relationship to something beyond him. What he does is not simply a matter of personal or even social, but of cosmic, concern. By the experience he is awed, humbled, belittled; but his very dejection becomes the source of his dignity. He is made great because he has found the greater. The other picture reveals, not solitude, but the most energetic fellowship; not meditation, but a strained activity. There is in it pride, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, "Let us build us . . . and let us make us a name." The rest needs no comment. We may be sure, however, that the confusion which resulted was not simply of "tongues," but of thought, and of the whole outlook upon life. In the first instance, man's claim to greatness rests on his moral relationship to a greater. The second picture has settled once and for all his inability to claim any greatness without that relationship.

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It is this truth that accounts for the curious contradiction which confronts us today as we try to estimate the worth of human personality. Mr. Bertrand Russell says that science has simultaneously and in equal measure "increased man's power and diminished his pride." I think it would be more nearly accurate to say that it has increased his power and pride and diminished his prestige. True, in the realm of philosophy, literature, art, poetry, and music we are, compared with the past, as a beggar to a prince; but technologically we are kings. And technological greatness is far more impressive than the greatness of our fathers, for with it comes power, a facility and a resourcefulness that are startling. So powerful, indeed, has man become that one of our modern novelists has written recently: "But hasn't it ever struck you that with every victory over nature won by the human spirit, a fragment of their omnipotence is wrested from the hands of the gods. . . . The day will come when we shall no longer need to pray. The hour will strike when the heavenly potentates will be forced to capitulate, and in their turn bend the knee to us. . . . Jehovah doesn't like engineers; that's my opinion." Von Hugel was probably right when he said that man was God's most dangerous rival.

Now the contradiction is this, that simultaneously with this awareness of his immediate consequence there arises the most pitiable estimate of his ultimate significance. One calls him a "sick fly"; another, "a small but boisterous bit of organic scum"; another, "a bit of cellular matter upon its way to become manure." And so *ad infinitum*. The cynic of Ecclesiastes who said that man was no better than the beast was a voice crying in the wilderness; but this is no solitary voice. This is a well-trained chorus choir.

This condition, in my judgment, confirms the truth of the observation we have made. Man's claim to greatness has never rested upon his achievements *per se*, but on his

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achievements as related to, or expressive of, something beyond himself—"thinking God's thoughts after Him," as it were. The moment he believes that his thoughts, aspirations, or what not, are purely his own, and that the cosmos knows nothing of them and cares less, then his achievements become a vain mockery. Indeed, the more he achieves, the more tragic becomes his condition. The more value he acquires, the more irrational his life becomes. He is engaged in a veritable dance of death. The more tantalizing the music, brilliant the lights, or elegant his evening attire, the more tragic, pathetic, and hopelessly farcical becomes the whole show. When he says, "I am the master of my fate," his fate becomes futility. When he says, "I am the captain of my soul," he immediately begins to question if he has a soul. In short, whenever he loses the sense of his moral relationship with Another higher than himself—never mind what else he gains—he cannot escape the conclusion that he is an accident, and because an accident, an incident.

My friends, I think it is a fact that if God goes, man goes also. For the thing that brings dignity and worth to human life is the feeling that it has some ultimate meaning. When we say that life has ultimate meaning, we imply that the values commanding our loyalty and devotion are not things that we have arbitrarily invented, but are the basic stuff of the universe itself. It is for this reason that we are capable of aspiration. When we cease to aspire, we cease to be men. But to what shall we aspire? "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills," says the man of faith. But without God the best we can say is, "I will lift myself by my shoe straps." As Professor Hocking puts it, "We cannot swing up a rope that is attached only to our own belt." This insight is as old as man. In the tombs of the ancient Orphics, recently unearthed, were found little tablets which bore the following inscription: "I am a child of earth and of starry heaven." Man may be biologically a beast, but he

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has consistently refused to remain on the beastly level. Truly,

"Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how mean a thing is man."

May I not remind you of the fact that we are not dealing with abstractions, but that the nature of that Higher Life has been revealed—was made flesh and dwelt among us. That at least is our faith. Whatever may be our theories concerning Christ, the unquestioned fact is that he has challenged the world to a complete reorientation of its thinking. His life has, to a degree achieved by no other, removed the clouds that had veiled the heights. He has shown us life on its upper levels. Where we say "Revenge," he says "Forgive." Where we say "Hate," he says "Love." Where we say "Get," he says "Give." In short, while we make selfishness with all its myriad evils the controlling motive, he shows the glory and true greatness of a ministering life that, through heroic and redemptive service, achieves self-perfection. "Higher than I." No wonder that men through all the ages have instinctively felt that to know Him is to know what God is like.

Finally, to this Rock we may be led. It is to what is involved in the establishment of that relationship, that we turn our thoughts in the following sermon.

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*"You must become something more than 'mere man' on
pain of becoming otherwise something less."*

—A. E. TAYLOR.

II

“. . . And your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.”

—Luke vi:35.

It is a fair question which we put to ourselves in our times —“What is the reward of Christian living?” To Jesus it was the establishment of a relationship. This is evident from his words recorded in Luke’s Gospel, the sixth chapter, at the thirty-fifth verse: “. . . And your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.”

One of our most successful college athletes of recent years was invited to become a professional football-player. Much to the regret of his friends, he left college without completing his course and joined a professional team. When asked his reason, he said that he was merely conforming to the great American slogan, namely, “What is there in it for me?”

One, therefore, has much sympathy with Peter, who quite bluntly said to Jesus, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.” He said no more. But we can complete his sentence—“What is there in it for us?” Is this profit or loss? He must have been thinking of his fishing-boats pulled up on the beach and of his fishing-trade which had passed into other hands.

It was not often that Jesus spoke of rewards to his followers. When the cause of truth becomes the prevailing passion of a man’s life, ulterior motives disappear. Results become incidental to processes. If Jesus, therefore, did not resort to bargaining, it was because he was swayed by this

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master passion. Whenever he did speak of rewards, however, his language was explicit, as is seen in our text. ". . . And your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest."

As one traces the concept of rewards through the Bible he cannot but see how the emphasis has shifted. In the Old Testament rewards were largely material. There are noticeable exceptions, to be sure, but one may say that, by and large, the children of Israel endured the long marches of the wilderness, with their hardships and privations, not so much from the lure of idealism as from the fact that they were to be rewarded in a very concrete and tangible way. They had been slaves in Egypt; they were to be property-holders in Palestine. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Yonder is the promised land, "flowing with milk and honey," "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Go possess it.

When one comes to the New Testament, however, he finds that the climate has changed overnight. Here, too, there is a promised land for the religious pilgrim, but it is not a thing; it is an ideal. It is not Canaan; it is the Kingdom of God. It is not something for us to possess; it is something for us to create. In short, it is not material, but spiritual.

Now it should be made very clear that if he offered them an ideal instead of a thing, it was not because he wanted to cheat them, but rather to be lavish with them. This was to him life's most coveted prize. Once, in describing the nature of the invisible, he said that the Kingdom of God was like a merchant seeking goodly pearls, who found one of great price and sold all he had to buy it. Again he said that the Kingdom of Heaven was like treasure hidden in a field; when a man found it, in his joy he went and sold all he had and purchased that field. One has to understand that it was in such terms that Jesus thought of spiritual values, before he can appreciate the meaning of the reward

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that Jesus is here offering. When he said, "And your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest," this was the "one pearl of great price"; this was the "treasure hid in a field," which "for joy thereof" a man purchased. In short, Jesus believed, and lived as if he believed, that the highest reward of life is spiritual, not material, and is to be found in the realm of the invisible rather than the visible.

When one says this he voices a platitude. Let us therefore seriously ask ourselves: Was Jesus right? Are the greatest compensations of life by-products of the search for an ideal objective? Let it be said that for many minds the mere fact that Jesus says so does not make it so. As a matter of fact men have sometimes given their lives in sincere devotion to beliefs concerning which they were mistaken. While we cannot help but have the highest respect for their devotion to the ideals in which they verily believed, we are compelled, reluctantly, perchance, to admit that they were mistaken.

I raise this question, therefore, in all seriousness. If life in America can be taken as any indication of what we really believe, then it can be said that there is hardly anything which we talk about more and believe in less than the reality and worth of this concept of Jesus. Life is the test. The tragedies of war, for example, are not in books that record them, but in lives that reflect them—in the actual breakdown of our moral standards, and all the alarming consequences that go with that catastrophe. The same can be said of our faith. It is not in our hymn-books or our Bibles. We wrote neither. The thoughts there expressed sprang out of life as naturally and spontaneously as do plants from the soil. We do not make such truths our own by expressing them, but by experiencing them. How often is it true that "dogma is the living faith of the dead and the dead faith of the living"? It is our life that really reveals our sense of values. If this is taken as the

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test, then it can be truly said that what we call spiritual values are pretty well marked down in this day and age!

Let us, therefore, see if we can make real that which so often seems vague. "Your reward shall be great." "Yes, what do we get?" "You are not going to get anything. Your reward shall be great. Ye shall *be* something. Ye shall be the children of the Highest." The first thing one means when he says that spiritual values, invisible though they be, are the supreme values of life, is—it is more important to be something than to get something.

This is one of the profoundest insights of religion. Have we fully caught the significance of that singular phrase used in the Old Testament to describe God, "I AM THAT I AM"? Dr. Moffatt translates the phrase, "I-will-be-what-I-will-be." Not "I have" nor "I get," but "I AM." The emphasis of religion is on being and becoming. In poetic language the Psalmist once described a religious man. "Blessed," said he, "is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. . . ." And why is he blessed? Because he shall be like something beautiful, "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. . . ." The New Testament enlarges upon the idea. "Follow me," said Jesus to Peter. "What do I get?" "Nothing. Follow me and I will make you to become something." "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become. . . ." We speak a great deal about the appeal of Nature. What has Nature to commend her—the flaming sky at sunset, the lake nestled among the hills, the flower in the crannied wall? Why do such things lure us? Simply because they are. Beauty is. That is all.

"Ye shall be," said Jesus. Surely this is no groundless truth. Not long ago I visited a boys' school in the South. Not often have I been so deeply impressed by a group of boys and their teachers. The whole atmosphere was one of

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culture and refinement. As I looked at those young men, soon to relinquish their cultural contacts with that school for the more hazardous adventures of life, what was my first concern for them? That they measure up to our vulgar standards of success? Surely not. For is there not much truth in the observation that success, as we popularly view it, is largely "futility on the upgrade"? As one thinks of youth the first thought is, "What is going to become of them?" Our material achievements, however great, never mitigate our moral failures. What shall it profit if one gains the whole world and loses himself? The man who cannot see this should not invoke our anger or resentment; he is to be pitied, that is all. It is precisely this fact that makes vast areas of life today unspeakably sad. The character of a man or of an age is known by its fruits. What is the fruit that grows upon the tree of life today? Some good things, to be sure; but read our novels, see our movies, behold us as we gather in our country clubs, listen to our conversation, note our interests; one is compelled to conclude that we lack character.

When I was a student in Ohio I frequently visited the State Library at Columbus. Over the entrance to that library are inscribed these words, "My treasures are within." Those words might well be inscribed across the threshold of life. We act, for the most part, as if all the treasures are without. Hence endless possession, accumulation, is our goal, rather than self-perfection. Religion insists that the ideal has prior claim. Seek ye first the ideal, and all these things shall be added.

But the reward of Jesus is great, not only because of its emphasis on personality, on being and becoming, but, in the second place, because of its social implications. We speak a great deal about social problems today. But what is the crux of all social problems? It might be expressed in one word, namely, relationships. The president of one of our Western colleges, in a recent Commencement ad-

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dress, sketched briefly the different stages through which the college has passed in its history. First there was the church college, the purpose of which was theological instruction. Then came the library college, with its emphasis upon general culture. Next came the laboratory college, which accentuated scientific research. He predicts that we are now entering a fourth stage, namely, the college of human relationships, which will train young people to face and to help solve the great problems that grow out of our social contacts.

What, for example, is the problem of nations? It is the problem of international relations. There are still statesmen who are trying desperately to prolong our policy of national isolation. That policy is outgrown. Our problem now is not how to get on without the rest of the nations, but, rather, how to get on with them. Or here is the problem of capital and labor. What is it? It is a problem of relationships. Or here is the problem of race. Relationships again. In short, every social problem, whatever its nature, is at heart precisely that. We make progress as we learn to live together in relationships that are ethical and amicable. .

"He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said, 'Thou ailest here, and here!' . . ."

It is this wound that the Gospel of Jesus essays to heal. The whole burden of his message deals with our relationships. In a word, if, loving the sinner, he hates sin with all the holy passion of his nature, it is because sin destroys man's supreme relationship, his relationship with God. The bearing of what we are saying on the words of our text becomes evident. Jesus attempts to right all wrong relationships by making us right in our supreme relationship, our relationship with God.

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After all, a man must make his major adjustment to life. Here, for example, is a mariner on the ocean. There are thousands of stars in the sky. What does he do? He selects one, the North Star, by which he plots his course. If his course is rightly related to that star, then automatically he establishes a right relationship to all the others. Now, to Jesus God was the North Star. He believes that if one is rightly related to God he cannot sustain wrong relationships to his fellows. If he insists on forgiveness, it is because only thus can we experience God's forgiving love. If he tells us to love our enemies, it is because through such love we know the love of God. If he tells us to live as brothers, it is because only thus can we be children of our Father. For many of us God is simply a philosophic problem that provokes an argument. For Jesus he was the moral fact that solves life's problems.

What, after all, is the ultimate nature of the world in which we are living? Is it a world that is physically law abiding and morally lawless? Is it a world in which a man who steps from an elevator must "watch his step," and yet in the moral realm can live with the carelessness and irresponsibility that befits a fool-proof universe? The thought seems utterly silly. To live as children of the Highest implies that we live as moral beings, akin to a universe that is at heart not mechanical, but moral. Jesus teaches that a man simply cannot live on moral terms with a moral universe, and at the same time consciously maintain immoral relationships with his fellow men. How he insists on that! "If therefore when you are offering your gift upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave there your gift before the altar, and go and make friends with your brother, first of all; then come and offer your gift." It is by making us right in our highest relationship that Christ becomes the restorer of all broken fellowships. In the light of such reasoning, salvation becomes a tremendous fact of personal and social

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readjustment. It was no puny gospel that the Apostle Paul preached when he said, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." That is still our gospel.

But in the third place the reward of Jesus is great because it gives us the key to the real meaning of life. We are all anxious to know whether life has any real meaning, and if so, where we can find it. Jesus tells us that it is through the Highest that we know life's hidden meaning.

God "the Highest"—that is a luring phrase. I have sometimes thought that men approach God as one does a mountain. From a distance the summit may be on our level of vision, but as we approach, the mountain becomes progressively higher, until at last its summit is lost from our view. But we know it is there, above us, a constant challenge to our courage. Even so, men have discovered God. Some of our early concepts are no better than caricatures. God was no higher than man. But Jesus, who came in closer contact with God, has told us that he is "the Highest." And we believe him.

It is this high relationship that we fear. We are living in an age that is afraid of what is high, an age that is endeavoring to learn the meaning of life through the lowest, rather than through the highest. But it is not a happy age; it is a hungry age. It is not a satisfied age; it is a sophisticated age. God has made us to soar like eagles. We are trying to live like barnyard fowls. But we are not content, nor, indeed, can we be. We are following the path of least resistance, but there is no peace in being morally spineless. It is the very moral effort which we dread that holds the healing for our frenzied souls.

We somehow act today as if compelled to accept the lowest, rather than the highest. If there are two possible interpretations of anything, we take the lower, believing that by so doing we come nearer the truth and are more "scientific." Like the onlookers at Pentecost, in the pres-

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ence of the unusual we say, "These men are drunk!" But they were not. Like the Pharisees of old when we see a holy life we say, "He hath a devil." But they were wrong. We are skilled in looking down and back, but awkward and self-conscious when we look forward and up. We are quite at home in our study of origins, but quite at sea in our views of destiny. All origins are admittedly low. Raphael's "Transfiguration" might be traced back to the crude drawings of the cave men. But which is art? Beethoven's Fifth Symphony might be traced back to the monotonous thud of the tom-tom in the jungle. But which is music? Man himself probably started as an amœba in the slime of a primeval mud-puddle. But what is man? Many of our modern writers are saying that the lowest is the standard. They are not satisfied in tracing us back to the animal, but insist on equating us with the animal. They act as if the cave man were more truly representative of humanity than Socrates, Plato, or Jesus. But it would, indeed, be a poor bargain if our knowledge of whence we came should destroy our faith in what we are and are potentially able to become.

In an age that stoops, Jesus stands, the embodiment of the Highest. No one has ever held such exalted views of the intrinsic worth of human life. Nor has anyone ever cherished such noble hopes for mankind's ultimate victory over all that is debasing. "I am the truth," said he. To believe in Christ is to believe that truth lies in the highest interpretation of human life and destiny, and to accept that as the heritage of man.

What, then, is it to be a child of the Highest? You will recall the old Scottish ballad, "Loch Lomon." The chorus runs: "Oh, you'll tak' the high road and I'll tak' the low road." These roads run all through life, from public duty to private thinking. The children of the Highest take the high road.—"Every man decideth the way his soul shall go." The decision makes all the difference to life.

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How true are the words that Tennyson puts on the lips of Guinevere:

“Ah, my God,
What might I not have made of Thy fair world,
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it.”

“... And your reward *shall be* great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.”

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*“Child, thou bringest to my heart
the babble of the wind and the water,
the flowers’ speechless secrets, the clouds’ dreams,
the mute gaze of wonder of the morning sky.”¹*
—RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

¹ From “Fireflies.” By permission of the Macmillan Company, Publishers.

III

“And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

—Matthew xviii:2-3.

Whenever one speaks of the unseen it is necessary to use some familiar symbol. Jesus was constantly doing that. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .” was his oft-repeated phrase. Let us consider one of the suggestive comparisons he once made in describing the nature of truth, and the spirit in which one should seek it. For surely it must be evident that how one seeks has much to do with what one finds. In the text we have selected Jesus uses the child as his symbol of truth, and adds, “Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

We shall not try to define the phrase “the Kingdom of Heaven.” “Definitions as a rule confine rather than define.” Suffice it to say that the Kingdom of Heaven is the kingdom of truth. It is either that or it is nothing. For Jesus it was no colorless abstraction, but the embodiment of all that was finest, most enduring and ultimately true in human life and experience. He has taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” and his cross is imperishable proof of the earnestness of his prayer. Moreover the reality of this concept appears in the fact that it has haunted the minds of men through nineteen centuries, and has become for multi-

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tudes the touchstone of progress, and the steady urge to unselfish, heroic living.

Let it be said first of all that some such ideal as that embodied in the phrase, "the Kingdom of Heaven", is indispensable for sane and purposeful living. If there is one word which aptly describes the temper of our age it is, I think, the word bewilderment. We seem to be progressively improving our technique, and to be growing correspondingly less certain as to what we should use this technique for. We are experts in meeting the immediate situations of life, but are baffled as we face life's ultimate meaning. In our views of human life and destiny we are overskilled in our use of the microscope, but woefully lacking in our use of the telescope.

I read a story not long ago of an entomologist who went out to the country to collect specimens. He immediately aroused the curiosity of the neighborhood, so strange did it seem to see a mature man, apparently sane, catching bugs. It was obviously quite impossible for him to explain his purpose to every curious-minded passer-by, and thus he hit upon these two terse phrases by which he stopped conversation. When asked, "What use are they?" he would reply, "No use." And when asked again, "Then what are you doing that for?" he would answer, "For fun." A very effective method of stopping conversation, but I fancy word must have gone abroad that an insane man was loose in the neighborhood!

Now that does not inaccurately describe the dilemma of many of us modern folk. Life for many of us appears to be of "no use," and we live it just "for fun." We travel fast, but seem to be going nowhere in particular. We are masters of the technique of fact-finding, but when our facts, our specimens, are collected, we do not quite know what to make of them. We are keen analysts, but seem to lack the compulsion that comes from a commanding view of life's

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total significance. Does not this disclose our need of some ultimate standard or norm for personal and social living?

One is well-nigh mystified today as he reads the literature of our social diagnosticians. Rather depressing reading! It is perhaps true that "the vices of an age, like the vices of an individual, are apt to get written on brass; its virtues, in water." So it would appear today. Many of our writers are skilled in telling us what is wrong, but seem hesitant in telling us what is right. They are assuring us that there is no king in our Israel, and every man must do that which is right in his own eyes. But if right and wrong, truth and error, become simply matters of personal taste or of individual opinion, then obviously there is no truth. For if there be no standard of what is ultimately right or true, how do we know that anything is wrong? If I say, "This is ugly," it is because I have a sense of what is beautiful. If I say, "That is a discord," it is because I have a sense of harmony. We are being told today that we are adrift, utterly "at sea," with no harbor in sight and no true course by which we could reach a harbor, if there were one. But if there is no harbor and no course, then obviously we are not adrift. It seems to me that in our learned attempts to justify our moral vagaries, we come at times dangerously near to sophistry.

The need, therefore, of some acknowledged principle of living that will lead us out of our confusion seems evident. Let us then, in the second place, look at the symbol that Jesus employs—a little child. It was always in terms of life that Jesus portrayed his truths. Even when the symbol was a thing, it was always something that functioned—leaven, light, salt, a seed. There is nothing dead about the Gospel of Christ. It is not static, but dynamic. It is never obsolete, but always pertinent. This is because his Gospel is the Truth, and Truth grows old without being outgrown. The mark of its maturity is perfection, not senility. Its symbol is ever the face of a child.

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What, then, is Jesus trying to teach as he makes a child the key to the Kingdom of Heaven? For one thing, is he not saying that personality, even in its most dependent form, that of a little child, is of supreme value? Surely this is a very definite guide for conduct. To deny the truth of the observation is to impugn the history of human progress.

This truth needs reassertion. I stood not long ago near the shores of Lake Michigan. Not far away were some little boys gambling. They were prematurely mature. Their faces were hard. They bore all the signs of neglect. I looked from them to the towering skyscrapers that adorn the Chicago skyline, and I thought, Which symbol represents our scale of values? What, after all, is the use of bigger and better machines, if the result is smaller and poorer men? Of magnificent garages to house our cars, when miserable tenements shelter our fellow men? Of barns pulled down and built greater to store our goods, while men are hungry and without work? We say, "Men exist for things." Christ says, "Things exist for men." Our test of greatness is possession and power; his test of greatness is one's capacity to be socially concerned, even for one of the least.

But the problem lies deeper. After all, our ethical ideals grow out of our moral insights. The motive that will ultimately produce a society that makes personality supreme will not be altruism, but a growing sense of the intrinsic moral worth of man. One is divulging no secrets when he says that it is precisely man's moral significance that is being challenged today. Cynicism is abroad. The cynic has been aptly described as the man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Least of all does he know the value of personality. He satirizes all that is highest and most sacred in human life. He would free us from the haunting suspicion that we are morally responsible beings. When the sense of our moral responsibility goes, we have lost the one thing that makes us men. The fact is that many of us are losing the awareness of our

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moral responsibility, for cynicism is contagious. It is because Jesus gave up his life in this very moral struggle, which we are being asked to discount, that his ethical ideals remain the highest and most compelling that we know. Time will not efface them.

Something in the spirit of childhood itself Jesus considers essential to one's discovery of truth. "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven." What is there in the spirit of childhood that guides one to the discovery of truth? The cynic will say that Christ is making capital of the child's ignorance. The child lacks critical judgment. He believes in fairies and Santa Claus. To enter the Kingdom of God, become a child and leave your critical faculties at the door.

You remember Alice said there were some things she could not believe.

"'Can't you?' replied the Queen in a pitying tone. 'Try again; draw a long breath and shut your eyes.'"

Many people regard those who are religiously-minded as doing precisely that. Those who profess faith in the unseen are thought of as being exceedingly gullible, naïve, and to that extent childish.

Let us, however, not be too hasty in our judgment. It is one thing to be sentimental; another, to be sympathetic. It is one thing to be childish; another, to be childlike. One can confidently assert that there is in the spirit of childhood something absolutely essential to our discovery of truth in any realm. What is it? John Ruskin pays tribute to the child's humility, faith, charity, and cheerfulness. We can add to that list two characteristics of which we shall speak briefly.

For one thing, the child has not lost the capacity for wonder. Wonder is often the beginning of wisdom. You will recall how Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* pictures himself as a child, seated at sunset on an orchard wall, eating his

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evening meal. "Those hues of gold and azure, that hush of World's expectation, as Day died, were still a Hebrew Speech for me; nevertheless I was looking at the fair illumined Letters, and had an eye for their gilding." As the poet puts it:

"For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say."

When Jesus said that unless we turn and become as little children we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, perhaps he meant that the capacity to wonder at the mystery of life was essential to one's discovery of the truth about life. To lose the sense of wonder and mystery is to lose the capacity for reverence and "Thought without reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous."

Are we losing this capacity? There is a tendency on the part of many today to dismiss to Fairyland all those areas of experience, or aspects of reality that lie outside the bounds of pure science. We recognize as being true only those facts that can be ascertained by our exact laboratory technique. Such "facts" are considered the boundaries of truth. Many of us are laboring under the illusion that science has robbed life of its mystery. "Mysteries must give place to facts" was the dogmatic utterance of a scientific writer some time ago, as illustrated by this parody:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star.
I do not wonder what you are.
What you are, I know right well,
And your component parts can tell."

That seems to be the attitude of some, and how sad it is, and stupid! Carlyle was once describing the people who claim that they can "explain" all and "account" for all and need to believe in nothing. He said that they were like men who walk abroad in full daylight, with a lantern, and insist on guiding you with it, although the sun is shining.

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He concluded that the man who sees no mystery in life, nothing to awaken him to reverence or mysticism, "is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye."

The truth of the matter seems to be that far from making life less mysterious, science has made it more so. Some time ago I drove my car into a public garage. No one was there when I entered. The garage was dimly lighted. I heard music. I followed the sound and discovered that the music was coming from an old dilapidated model T Ford in which a hard-pressed salesman had installed a radio to cheer him on his way. As I stood in that poorly lighted garage and listened to the melodious tones of a violin coming out of that dirty and dilapidated Ford, I thought: Has science destroyed mystery? Suppose I knew all the scientific facts that produced that phenomenon. What of it? Have we forgotten the fine distinction of Coleridge when he said that there were two kinds of wonder—the first, "the child of ignorance"; the last, "the parent of adoration"?

Take such an everyday fact as the law of gravity. Because I may be able to write the mathematical equivalent of the gravitational formula, does that destroy the mystery of gravity? It did not for Mr. Huxley. This is what he said: "Whoso appreciates all that is implied in the falling of a stone, can have no difficulty about any doctrine simply on account of its marvelousness." Mysteries, therefore, have not given place to facts and never will. The deepest philosophy comes from "looking into the heart of a fact." How much do we know, anyway? Said one of the greatest medical men in England not long ago, "We should be so wise if we could really understand a worm." If some of our cocksure cynics and dogmatists would meditate upon those words, they would probably be delivered from that narrow pride of intellect which often unnecessarily limits the range of our interests and imprisons our spirit. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because

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Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

One is greatly relieved to observe that modern science, particularly as interpreted by its ablest exponents, seems to be leaving the door open to something beyond its own findings in a way that it has not done in the past, especially in the hands of its more amateurish devotees. Here is Professor Einstein, for example, saying in a recent article in the *Forum*: "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." Dr. Millikan expresses the same thought when he writes, "Fullness of knowledge always and necessarily means some understanding of the depths of our ignorance, and that always is conducive to both humility and reverence." Such statements and similar ones coming from recognized leaders in the field of science would seem to confirm the insight of Jesus, who called a little child and set him in the midst of them.

It follows that those for whom life has not become a matter-of-fact affair, will, like the child, make some use of their intuitions. It was President Eliot who said that if a child, after looking you in the face, should refuse to come to you for any reason except timidity, then it would be well to go home and examine yourself. Some truth is too large for our little logic. It is grasped as we bring our total personality into responsive contact with reality. Like the child, we sense it. We know we are right even if we cannot give reasons. This is true even of scientific truth. In the fifth century B.C., Greek philosophy was greatly exercised about the nature of matter. Was it "continuous" or "discontinuous"? That is to say, was it more like the sea, or the sand on the seashore? The school of philosophers decided in favor of the discontinuity of matter and thus

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by what Sir James Jeans calls an "intuitional conjecture," discovered a truth which modern science has now confirmed. Similarly Galileo, watching a swinging lamp as he sat in the cathedral, and Newton observing a falling fruit, may be said to have had insights which led them to basic scientific discoveries. To be sure, our intuitions must always be brought under the discipline of reason, but if we ignore them, we discard what often is the opening wedge into large areas of reality.

There is another observation which should be briefly made. It is what Dean Sperry has in mind when he refers to the child as being "unself-conscious." An exaggerated self-consciousness is never a healthy condition. When we become absorbed with ourselves, usually what is worse in us engages our attention. One wonders if this does not explain the offensiveness of much of our current literature. It proposes to give us realism, but the kind of realism that lacks orientation, that looks down but not up, is far too partial to be either healthy or true.

Many things have conspired to bring about this condition. For one thing, the sense of dependence which we once had on powers outside of ourselves is rapidly departing as each new scientific discovery increases our resourcefulness. Moreover, modern psychology has done much in helping us to understand ourselves. Our hopes and fears, our motives and moods, are all labeled, catalogued, and pigeonholed. We are in the hands of experts and specialists.

Now surely no one would speak sneeringly or disparagingly of all this. On the contrary, the help which has been made available by this detailed knowledge and analysis of personality, has been great and we trust will increase. But is this all that is involved in the maxim, "Know thyself"? Far from it. No more does knowing the chemical composition of water exhaust the meaning of Niagara. We are in danger of losing the whole in the parts. A fullness of experience, a feeling of selfhood, which comes only

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as something greater than ourselves, makes us captive and thus frees us from ourselves; and "no shivering of our existence into bits for scientific analysis will disclose the secret."

It is this secret that the child holds. Many have retained it through all their mature years. They are blessed. There is a sense of fullness and freedom which many lives impart. This results from the fact that their flickering torches have been yielded to the light that follows all their way. "You cannot be a whole unless you join a whole"—

"The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors."

These then are some of the truths that Jesus may have had in mind as he called a little child and set him in the midst of his disciples. The question that recurs is: Shall we look upon this and similar teachings of Jesus regarding the unseen as being fanciful and visionary or see in them a wisdom that is profound? It is to this question that we turn our thoughts in the following sermon.

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“Call us back from a wisdom that is not wise, because it is hard, untrustful, and doubtful of those starry ideals by which Thou art revealed.”

—JOSEPH FORT NEWTON.

“Confucius was great enough to be wise, but Jesus was too great to be wise only.”

—JOHN KNOX.

IV

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

"And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

—Matthew VII:24-27.

With these words Jesus concluded his sermon. It was a dramatic conclusion. The people who heard him were astonished. They had every right to be. His words carried with them an air of finality quite lacking in the cautious, hesitant teachings of the scribes.

But we are not astonished, and that is the trouble. We have grown accustomed to these words. The very familiarity of this parable militates against its message. The significance of its truth is lost in the familiarity of its phrases. If we challenged his authority we should be better off, and so would he, for Christ does not fear our examination so much as he fears our indifference. We are not astonished. We concede him the right to say such things and reserve for ourselves the right to ignore them. We revere

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him and evade him. We call him, "Lord, Lord"—but . . . Let us look at this parable of the wise and foolish builders.

One of the things which should be said is this: the mere fact that one builder was wise and the other foolish seems to have had very little effect upon the weather. Upon both houses, the one that had a foundation, and the other without it, "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat."

One of the most constant and difficult problems for Christian people is the fact that the world without seems to be so indifferent to the world within. It is easy to explain the fact that God makes his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust with equal impartiality, on the ground of his universal love for all his children, but it is not so easy to see why the floods and the storms should come to the good and bad, the wise and foolish, alike. How does it happen that some of the finest lives seem to encounter the fiercest weather? The supreme example of this is the life of the very man who spoke this parable, for if there is one fact that meets with universal acclaim, it is that Jesus in no sense merited the treatment which he experienced. "I find no fault in this man," was the verdict passed on the one who suffered most.

From this observation, many people have argued that nature is completely indifferent to the way we live, that there is in the universe no mind nor heart, and hence, that our faith has no basis in reality. This picture of an indifferent universe is well described by Matthew Arnold, when he writes:

"Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room,

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Nor is that wind less rough
That blows a good man's barge."

So it would appear on the surface. But life is more than appearance and more than surface. Here is a doctor, let us say, who is going on an errand of mercy. He comes to a traffic light and it goes red and detains him. He stops. Here is another man who is going on an errand of mischief. He comes to a traffic light and perchance it is green, and speeds him on his way. The lights work, it would seem, quite impartially to the wisdom or folly of one's mission, and sometimes we even say that the evil man "gets the breaks." But it is one thing to be impartial and another to be indifferent. Our whole Christian faith rests upon the assumption that, although the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon good and evil alike, with equal impartiality, there is at the heart of the universe a profound concern and solicitude. There is in the very nature of this universe something that is eternally on the side of the man who goes on an errand of mercy. This is seen from the fact that the house that rests upon the rock stands, while the one on the sand falls. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Now what is Jesus saying in this parable? He is really making a tremendous claim. He had just completed the Sermon on the Mount, which reveals those supreme heights of spiritual insight that we love to look at from a distance, but do not seriously try to climb. And after concluding the sermon, he said that those who take his words seriously and try to act upon them in their personal and social relationships, will live enduring lives, and those who do not, will be brought to destruction. Truly, a tremendous claim. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock."

Yes, but the foolish man also built. The thing that Jesus condemned in that second builder was not his inactivity,

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but his indiscretion. It was not that he did nothing, but that he did the wrong thing. He was not like the man in the other parable, who, through cowardice, or caution, or laziness hid his talent, and did nothing with it. This man, on the contrary, did something. He was active, energetic. No doubt he meant well. He, too, built a house. Goethe probably was right when he said, "Nothing is more terrible than active ignorance."

Precisely for this reason it is difficult to arrest or make an impression on his temper. It is easy to say to the man who does nothing, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." But according to Jesus, this particular man is neither wicked nor slothful. He is foolish—"a foolish man." This is why it is so hard to deal with him. For, if you argue with him, he will not point you to a vacant lot, deserted and grown with weeds. He will point you to a house, neatly and artistically built, and, from all outward appearances, just as fine-looking, if not more so, than your own. Indeed, he may even do more than that. He may point you to this year's barn—twice as big as the one he had last year, for he has pulled it down and built greater. But to this, too, comes the reply of Jesus, "Thou fool."

I have been tremendously impressed as I have thought of how many times Jesus characterized people as being foolish. I do not know whether it was the innate courtesy of his nature, his insistence upon giving his brother man the benefit of the doubt, or his unwillingness to impute wrong motives, but I do know that where we should say, "That man is downright wicked or mean," Jesus said he was foolish. When the man in the parable, in the face of all the poverty and need of the world about him, pulled down his barns and built greater, we should have said, "That man is downright wicked. He is inhuman." Jesus said, "He is foolish." The trouble was not in his heart, but in his head. What he lacked was not justice, but judgment. When the five virgins came with no oil in their

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lamps, Jesus did not say they were wicked, but that they were foolish. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," said he of his generation. And to cap the climax, when he hangs upon the cross, his body mangled by the hands of wicked men, he does not pray: "Father, destroy them. They are cruel and beastly." He says, rather: "Father, forgive them. They are foolish men. They know not what they do." Those words stand as an unparalleled expression of divine courtesy.

But it is more than courtesy. It is wisdom. For when a man or a group of men violate the moral laws of God, laws which we believe Christ has embodied and expressed, he works havoc not simply on his fellows; ultimately he works havoc on himself; he throws a boomerang. "Harm watch, harm catch.—Curses always recoil on the head of him who imprecates them.—If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own.—Bad counsel confounds the adviser.—The devil is an ass." Emerson's words are true. When my act not only hurts another, but comes back and hurts me, as it ultimately must, then my wickedness becomes wickedness to myself. It is therefore more than wickedness. It is folly. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets. . . ." ". . . If thou hadst known. . . ." Known what? Known that you were thereby killing yourself. That is why Frederick Palmer, at the close of the war, wrote a book which he called *The Folly of Nations*, not *The Wickedness of Nations*. During that bloody contest, as we read of the unspeakable horror of it all, we were impressed with the wickedness of man, but in the clear light of the after years the whole thing seems to us the most amazing expression of human folly.

I stress this thought because it is important. The one thing that the world has never conceded to Jesus is the wisdom and sheer sensibleness of his teachings. The Gospel of Jesus has never been able to command the intellectual

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respect and confidence of the world of affairs. To be sure, there have been some great men who have seen the practical bearing of Jesus' Gospel. One is surprised, for example, to hear Bernard Shaw saying this: "I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a practical statesman." He says further, "The demands of Jesus are turning out to be good sense and sound economics." Or here is Matthew Arnold saying, "Nothing will do, except righteousness; and no other conception of righteousness will do, except Christ's conception of it."

These statements from such discriminating minds should carry weight. By and large, however, we do not believe them. We think of Jesus as one who appeals to our goodness and we fail to see that he appeals equally to our intelligence. The result is that religion is something which too exclusively stirs our emotions, but does not sufficiently command our wills. We feel, but do not act. We have never been able to see the wisdom of goodness, the practicableness of idealism, the workableness of the way of love. We think that these are fine things at a distance. We regard them as we do a flower garden. At the close of the day, as we return home tired, we like to go into the flower garden and be inspired by looking at the flowers; but when we are hungry, when the needs of life clamor, we do not go to a rose garden—we go to a vegetable garden.

The thing we have never been able to do is to be sustained by the truth of beauty. Is it not true that religion is for us largely something that tickles our esthetic imagination? Have we not forgotten that Jesus referred to himself as being the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, and to his Gospel as being the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World? Bread, water, salt, light—they are all practical. Have we not forgotten that Jesus did not come sim-

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ply to give artists a subject for pictures, or poets a subject for songs, but that he rather came to be a way of life? A house—a symbol that represents the most elementary, practical, physical needs of man. That was the symbol that he used to express the workableness of his teachings. But that is the truth that we have never grasped, and so we build our houses according to our own wisdom and the exact logic of our plans. But they fall. History bears record of the wreckage. And if they do not fall they totter. No one can think of life in this country today and not honestly confess that there is something basically wrong with our economic and social structure. The condition is, to say the least, unhealthy. Jesus looks at it and says, "Foolish man."

Our present disillusionment and bewilderment offer an unparalleled opportunity for the church to proclaim again the wisdom of the Gospel. It is our privilege to preach the wisdom of goodness, the wisdom of honesty, the wisdom of love. Knowledge will not save us. Few ages have had more knowledge and less wisdom than our own. Merely preaching this Gospel is not the end of the matter. The church must live it.

Now if we are going to live it, what are the requirements? How can we help others, not simply to respect Christ because we believe he is good, but to follow him because we believe in the sanity and sheer sensibleness of his teachings? Let me suggest one or two things from this very parable.

Why did one man put his house upon the sand? Well, for one thing, he could build it more quickly. You can build a house more rapidly if you do not bother about the foundation. No doubt the foolish builder was having a housewarming party while the other man, as Luke tells us, "digged deep" to find the rock.

But we do not want to dig deep. Can there be any doubt that our "booms," which almost invariably become boom-

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erangs, and our wild speculations, are largely responsible for the economic and social distress in which we find ourselves today. We are eager for immediate results, with little or no thought to processes or to permanence. And that is the antithesis of the Gospel.

Indeed, many of us Americans would hesitate to put our houses upon the rock if we knew that by so doing they would last. Apparently, if there is one thing we do not want it is a thing that will last. We are terribly bored with the thought of permanence. We must at all costs be in style, and styles change. We are suffering from the disease of being up-to-date. But the tragedy of being up-to-date is that one very soon becomes out-of-date. We are transferring this very mania to the realm of morality. Many of us become devotees of new moral cults, not because we have seriously examined them philosophically or viewed them in their historical perspective, but merely because they are new. We are so terribly afraid of missing anything. We mistake the new for the true. It may be, but more often it is not. The thing we shall have to learn is that there are some flowers in God's garden that are not annuals. There are some truths that are neither new nor old, but are eternal. Only thus will sanity once more return to our hectic minds.

In his temptation in the wilderness, Jesus turned his back once for all upon short-cut methods. He was offered the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. He could have had them. Had he accepted them, his generation would have called him king, and his influence would have progressively waned. But he "dugged deep." He lived for the future. His generation called him a criminal. Today his throne is secure. We call him Lord of all. "The Lord is slow"—but sure. No one will ever see the truth of the divine wisdom who does not see the present in perspective, and into whose plans there does not come the thought of consequences.

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There is another reason why I believe this man put his house on the sand. Nobody sees a foundation. Why waste time on something that nobody sees? If people do not see it, you cannot advertise it, and in this day and age if a thing cannot be advertised, what use is it? When we advertise our modern buildings we do not say, "This has a good foundation." We rather say, "This has a fine sun porch," or "a splendid roof garden." Our social buildings are very imposing, but one wonders if they will stand. We are piling on the superstructure. But are we thinking of what is below? One hardly picks up a paper but that he reads of some new merger, some new combination. Up and up the structures go. The question is not, "Do they look well?" They do. The question is, "Will they stand?" What do they rest on? Savonarola said that the citizens of Florence had mistaken a whale for a rock, and were trying to build a city on a whale's back. Are we perchance trying to do the same thing?

Upon what does our economic structure rest? Is it unfair to say that by and large it rests on the assumption that every man shall get all he can for himself? It is evident that that ethic is inadequate. The amazing corruption in our civic life which threatens to destroy the foundation of our democracy, is proof enough that profit at all costs is a most damaging motive. The sufferings of countless thousands who, but for public generosity, would starve in a land of plenty, is added proof.

No one will deny the legitimacy of the acquisitive instinct. But to make it the controlling motive of conduct is to admit that man is no better than the tiger that goes out to kill its prey. The Gospel of Jesus, in its plea to consider our neighbor's welfare and not simply our own, has seemed to us too idealistic. But the denial of that Gospel predicts at present some very tragic results. To say that the acquisitive instinct is the one most worthy of man is certainly to do violence to truth. It is not primary

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in the pursuit of art, the development of literature, or the growth of science. Certainly affluence is not the only spur to achievement. "Why an Einstein? Why a Lincoln? Why a Burbank? Why a Steinmetz? Why a Pasteur, this great-grandson of a serf? Why a Spinoza, grinding lenses for a living? Why a Luther, a Galileo, and the host of other luminaries who stretch along the vistas of the past like stars on a darkened night, and who pursued their quest for truth and beauty in spite of poverty, the pillory, and threat of death?" Why should we make primary in the world of business the individualistic expression of an instinct which plays only a secondary rôle in so many other vastly important areas of human life?

It is precisely because religion reaches down to these hidden motives that its message is at once uncongenial and imperative. It does not deal with effects, but causes; not with symptoms, but diseases. Its truest language is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart," "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." It affects the world without by changing the world within. It is this "right spirit" that Jesus had and we lack. Had he yielded simply to the acquisitive instinct, he would have been called a success according to the shallow standards of his age. By being up-to-date, he soon would have been out-of-date. It is not that he placed no value upon material things; it is that he refused to believe that they were of supreme value or that they were big enough to challenge the spirit of man. We act as if "the only things that count are the things that can be counted." According to Jesus, the things that counted most were the things you could not count. That is the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, with its clear and consistent emphasis upon that quality of life that lies beyond the boundaries of the visible.

These, then, are the things that prevent us from seeing the wisdom of the Gospel—thoughtlessness and superficiality. We should be much better off if we did less and

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thought more, if we were less concerned about the eyes of men and gave more thought to the eyes of God, who looketh not at the outward appearance, but seeth "in secret." "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell. . . ."

"Foolish man!"

The PRINCE of PEACE

"Here is war. A British sergeant on the Somme has said that through those long months when the two battle lines kept up their continuous exchange of shells, he could not get away from the feeling that Christ was out between the lines and that the shot passed through His body. Certainly war between fellow-Christians pierces and tears the Body of Christ, which is the Church."

—HENRY SLOANE COFFIN.

"When men out of hatred and ambition fight with and destroy one another, they fight under the banner not of Christ, but of the devil."

—COLET.

V

*"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time
... but I say unto you."*

—Matthew v:21-22.

We shall speak today of the wisdom of Jesus as it bears on what is considered the greatest social problem of our age—the problem of war. It is unnecessary to speak of the steps which we have taken—on paper—to abolish war. Suffice it to say that what has been written on paper remains to be written on our hearts. No machinery works without power. Peace needs and must have a motive—a motive that is moral. It is in behalf of this necessity that we speak.

There are many ethically-minded people today who wonder why it is that when we talk of peace we should talk of Christ. The causes of war, they tell us, are quite evident. They are largely economic. The problem of war, we are assured, is thus a human problem. Why should we befuddle an ethical issue by bringing in religious considerations? While such a statement no doubt contains much truth, it rather betrays only a partial understanding of the issue. Every great social problem is ultimately a moral one. You cannot change the gear of human life from war to peace by throwing out a clutch. The shift is not mechanical, but moral. It demands adjustments that are deep-seated. If, therefore, we insist today that Christ has a tremendous contribution to make to the world's peace, it is because he has touched life at its deepest sources. One is not belittling the baffling problems which will tax those

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technically capable of solving them, when one insists that the basic problem is a moral one. It is because Christ illuminates this problem that he stands in the vanguard of the peace movement. Let me, therefore, mention in no sense exhaustively a few of the contributions which Christ by his life and teachings makes to peace.

The first contribution that Jesus can make to the peace of the world is faith that peace is possible. Christ was not a moral cynic. He came into a world that was full of bad rumors, doleful traditions that had assumed all the finality of truth. One rumor was that human nature could not be changed. "What has been shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun."

Now if peace is not possible, let us stop talking about it and face frankly the tragic fact that war is here to stay. Is there any greater drag on peace today than the fact that multitudes view it as being an empty dream? Even some Christian people so regard it. Talk to the average citizen today about war and you immediately strike the snag of moral inertia. He will say, "Yes, but you know we have always had war, and always will." That thought found classic expression by a noted British visitor at the Institute of Politics a few years ago. He said, "For as long a time as the records of history have been preserved, human society has passed through a ceaseless process of violence and adjustment. . . . The world continues to offer glittering prizes to those who have stout arms and sharp swords, and it is therefore extremely improbable that the experience of the future nations will differ in any material respect from that which has happened since the twilight of the human race." Lord Birkenhead's words found current expression in a recent article in an American magazine. "For centuries," said the writer, "man has pursued the great illusion that it was possible to eliminate war from the world." Now as long as such a belief finds general acceptance, the cause of peace carries a millstone about its neck.

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But is there no answer to this? Has not Jesus some authority here? "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you." And what did he say? "Greater works than these shall ye do." "Ye must be born again." "With God all things are possible." He spoke of putting new cloth on new garments, and new wine in new bottles. It is not that Jesus was a facile optimist. It was rather that he refused to make what was base the measure of man. As Dr. Hugh Black finely says, "He ever took men on their strongest side. He accepted the highest in them as representing their true self. He believed the best of them, and so despaired of none but hoped for all. He discovered soul, however buried in sense. . . . In the company of sinners he dreamed of saints." In short, Jesus looked beyond actualities to possibilities. He refused to attach finality to what is, if it contradicted his faith in what ought to be. He believed in the creative possibilities of human personality. Indeed, the world was not sure what personality was until Jesus came. There is a sense in which he may be said to have discovered it—the confusion created by modern psychology notwithstanding. He believed in the innate nobleness of man, a nobleness which, even if dormant, never dies. That is why the Gospel is good news. It is a Gospel of Hope.

The remarkable fact is that the religion of Jesus succeeded and succeeds. It is not a fiction, but a faith. It produced two miracles—the Christian life and the Christian society. Peace is possible. There is nothing that humanity wants that it cannot get. The trouble with our efforts toward peace is the trouble with our attitude to all good things: we have far too much wishbone and not enough backbone! The dead weight of that moral inertia must give place to the inspiration of a moral incentive. Peace is quite possible. What has been does not have to be. "Ye must be born again." Jesus believed that what was ethically neces-

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sary was morally possible. You can change human nature. "Greater works than these shall ye do."

There was another false rumor abroad in Jesus' day. It was that revenge was both natural and effective. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If a man harms you, get even, "go him one better." Fight fire with fire. Hate those that hate you. Do to others what you know they would like to do to you—but do it first! Jesus looked through all the implications of that attitude and said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." And what did he say? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Rightly has this been called "Christ's most striking innovation in morality." This law of unlimited forgiveness gave a startling shock to the beliefs and notions of mankind. Indeed, it may be regarded as the dividing line between ancient and modern morality. Not only did the ancients not forgive their enemies, but what is more, they had no wish to do so. One is not suggesting that forgiveness was entirely unknown to the ancient world, but one is saying that what the ancients regarded as an impossible virtue, Christ makes a plain duty.

It is Dr. Fosdick, I believe, who relates the story of a young woman who, during the Armenian atrocities, was pursued, with her brother, by a Turkish soldier. The brother was killed before his sister's eyes. She escaped. Later on, being a nurse, she was forced to work in a military hospital. Into her ward one day was brought this Turkish soldier. She recognized him. He was very ill. A slight neglect on her part would have been all that was necessary to insure his death. The young woman, who is now safe in this country, describes the struggle that ensued. The old Adam cried, "Revenge!" The new Christ cried, "Love!" Love conquered. She nursed him as carefully as she did any other patient. One day he recognized her. Unable to

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restrain his curiosity, he asked her why she had not let him die. She replied, "I am a follower of Him who said, 'Love your enemies and do them good.'" He was silent. At last he spoke. "I never knew there was such a religion. If that is your religion, tell me more about it, for I want it." Forgiving love! That is something that makes an exacting demand upon the strongest nature. But love never faileth.

There was another terrible tradition in Jesus' day. It was to the effect that the surest way to settle vexed questions was to fight them out with the sword. It was thought that physical force was the only reliable arbiter of our disputes. Jesus did not accept that belief. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." What did he say? "Put up again thy sword . . . for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." In other words, Jesus believed that force was absolutely futile in the settlement of any moral issue. The history of war's aftermath bears him out.

You will perhaps recall Robert Southey's poem, "After Blenheim"—

"It was a summer evening,
Old Kaspar's work was done. . . ."

But during his play that day, Kaspar's grandson, Peterkin, had found the skull of some soldier from the battle of Blenheim, and upon finding this mute evidence asked his grandfather "what they killed each other for."

"But what good came of it at last?"
Quoth little Peterkin:—
'Why that I cannot tell,' said he,
'But 'twas a famous victory.'"

"A famous victory"!

Premier Mussolini, in addressing his Black Shirts not long ago, said that they must "keep alive the cult of victory in the hearts of youth." "If the need arises, you vet-

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erans must be ready to fight and win again." "Win again"! Unless we are careful the gaudy glitter of some "famous victory" will lure us again to our undoing and our doom.

I have known many fantastic patriots to engage in prolonged and heated discussions as to who won the war. I know some Americans who would be terribly incensed were one to suggest that America did not win the war. Well, now, seriously, who won the war? Upon whose side stood this "famous victory"? The truth is that nobody won the war. In modern wars it is quite evident that there are no victors. We are all vanquished. How could anybody win in a war that cost the nations of the world two hundred and fifty billion of dollars, and the lives of thirteen million men? Did England win the war? What did she win, when she lost more than a million of the flower of her land and increased her debt from one billion to thirty-nine billion dollars? Did France win the war? What did she win, when she lost two million men and increased her debt from six billions to forty-six billions of dollars? Did America win the war? She was made rich by it, we say. Yes; but as Emil Ludwig truly remarks, we were made rich not by our "participation in the second half of the war but, rather, abstinence during the first half." For America herself, in addition to hundreds of thousands slain, increased her debt from one billion to twenty-five billion of dollars. Nor is all this, terrific as it is, the most serious cost of war. The real cost of war is never tabulated. The breakdown of morality, the cheapening and coarsening of human life, "the loss of faith in justice, in humanity, in the soul itself"—these results do not appear in a statistical chart. As a matter of fact we shall be reaping, for generations to come, the miserable harvest of that tragic venture. No nation is victorious in modern wars. "As well talk of cutting off a finger without injuring the hand, as to talk of defeating another nation for your own benefit." Any nation who thinks she can win anything in a modern war

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has temporarily lost her mind. "Only one came out of the war with an enhanced reputation—Jesus."

This truth, then, is another great contribution that Jesus has made to the world's peace. Long ago he predicted the utter futility of force. Force is a blind alley. For every problem that war "solves" it creates a dozen more. This is well illustrated in these modern days by Gandhi. With his possessions limited to a loin cloth and a bowl of rice, he yet holds the destiny of the British Empire in his hands. Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right. Force never makes a wrong right. In modern wars there are no victors. "The slayer is slain," said Homer long ago. "Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won." Those are not the words of a pacifist. They were uttered by the Duke of Wellington.

There is another contribution that Christ has made to the peace of the world. It is perchance his greatest. I refer, of course, to his concept of world brotherhood, implicit in his teaching of the Kingdom of God.

He came into a world of national, racial, and social exclusiveness. Juvenal voiced its spirit when he remarked that life "no longer seems worth living when a Roman cannot walk the Via Sacra unelbowed by Greeks and Syrians." To the Greeks, too, the rest of mankind were barbarians. To the Mohammedans the non-Moslem is an infidel. There is no real brotherhood in Hinduism, with its divisional caste system. Jesus' own race had no dealings with the Samaritans. They were considered vastly inferior. Nordic supremacy really is not a very original idea! Jesus had no part in this bigotry. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you. . . ." What did he say? ". . . All ye are brethren." "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother. . . ." ". . . Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. . . ."

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There was a time when these words of Jesus might have seemed sheer nonsense. Today they are sober truth. We are brethren. Science has made us brethren, in the sense that it has brought the remotest corners of the world to our doors. It has made the world a veritable "whispering gallery." In the year 1833 William Carey, then in India, had great cause for excitement. Steamboats had brought news to Calcutta *via* Egypt in sixty-four days! "We here," the missionaries wrote, "know all that has been going on at home up to the beginning of February; yet it is only April 24th." Today that news could be flashed from London to Calcutta in less time probably than it has taken me to record this incident. An event that occurs in the remotest corner of the world this morning we shall probably read about in our evening papers! How futile, in such a world, to talk of isolation!

Moreover, the nations of the world are brethren in another sense. We are economically interdependent. How long would our rubber factories operate without the raw material that comes from Asia? How long would our steel factories run without the fifty-seven nations from whom the forty ingredients of steel are imported? We cannot get on without one another economically. "Man is a bundle of relations. . . . Insulate and you destroy him. He cannot live without a world." How true are Emerson's words! I trust the following incident will not seem trivial. The seeming triviality of it adds to its significance. Who would think that a mere change in women's fashions would affect the economic condition of the world? But it did. When women decided to bob their hair, some textile mills in New England came upon hard times. The chief market for their goods was in far-away China. The principal industry of these Orientals was the manufacture of hair-nets. Since they could no longer sell, they were unable to buy. Men were thrown out of work in New England and in distant China. That is typical of our modern age. Start

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a rumor in the remotest corner of the world today and see what happens in Wall Street! A depression today is no longer national; it is international. No nation in the long run prospers at the expense of any other nation. We are like Alpine climbers, tied together. We may or may not advance. One thing, however, is certain. Whatever we do, we shall do together.

This, then, is the kind of world in which we are living. The world is no longer an organization. It has become an organism. We cannot get on without one another. The question is, can we get on with one another? The tragedy of the modern world is that it is not willing to face this fact. It is applying a medieval psychology to a situation which has made that psychology hopelessly obsolete. It is trying to fit medieval political ideas into a world of new relationships, and by no conceivable artistry can it be done. We Americans are still talking about avoiding "entangling alliances." How can we avoid a thing which is already an accomplished fact? Why not face it? William Carey used to hang in his workroom a map of the world. That map was also hung in his heart. It was said that he "felt the word 'world.'" Do we feel it? "Patriotism is not enough!" said Edith Cavell as she died. Prophetic words! It is not easy to change our long-established attitudes, particularly when they are rooted in our emotional life. But that is the task to which peace calls us. For to bring into this new world a conceited and narrow-minded nationalism is to court disaster. Is there any greater peril to world peace today than the noisy politician who appeals to all that is narrow and selfish, but has no more insight or grasp of what has actually happened than an eighth-grade child?

If we cannot live together, it seems quite evident that we shall not be able to live at all. Christ saw this long ago. This is why he cannot be dismissed from any serious talk of peace. Peace is a world problem. He was a world citizen. He said that men of all nations should learn to live in

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friendly coöperation, rather than in selfish strife. Science, which has annihilated distance, and the fact of our economic interdependence, make his teachings no longer optional, but imperative.

My friends, do you see the significance of what we have been saying? It may all be expressed in one sentence: War and Christianity cannot abide on the same planet. War flatly denies everything that Christ affirms. It denies his faith in the creative possibilities of human nature. It denies his gospel of forgiving love. It denies his insight as to the futility of force. And finally, it makes perfect ruin of his ideal of brotherhood, the Kingdom of God. I know of no more striking indication of this fact than what happened in Boston in the winter of 1917-18. The Association to Abolish War desired to have the Sermon on the Mount printed and distributed without note or comment. The authorities prohibited this act on the ground that it might be considered pro-German!

We have, then, our choice. Christ or Mars? It cannot be both. We have outlawed war in theory. Shall we in practice? Peace costs. It will not drop from the sky by some divine fiat. Christ has blazed the trail, a trail as yet to many eyes invisible. He is the Prince of Peace. Who follows in his train?

The TEACHER'S LESSON

*"To you the torch we fling';
The challenge yet is heard,
Bequest of fullest sacrifice,
A life-demanding word.
Yet this thought with it comes
A question tinged with doubt—
Shall we the torch to others pass
Whose light we've let go out?"*

—ARTHUR B. DALE.

VI

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

—*Ezra VII:10.*

So far in the discussion of our theme we have been trying to give some meaning to the things that are not seen and eternal. In the following sermons we shall speak of the responsibility that rests on those who profess the faith of which we have been speaking. Religion is not really ours until we share it. A faith that is not contagious is not vital. A candle under a bushel is no candle at all. Our thought, therefore, while it is addressed primarily to those who are appointed to teach religion in church school and church, should not seem irrelevant to anyone. For if religion is life, then every life that possesses it, teaches it. Its sanctions lie not in official appointments, but in personal experiences.

One would naturally suppose that we would go to the life of Jesus for the basis of our thought. He stands in history as the supreme religious teacher. His happy use of illustration, his matchless parables, his simplicity and directness, his profound spiritual insight and incomparable grasp of truth—all these things, and others like them, would naturally point to him as the great example. He himself said, “Learn of me.”

We shall base our thought, however, on a passage from the Old Testament. Christianity owes an unpayable debt to Judaism. Not the least of its indebtedness is to Judaism’s emphasis on teaching religion. We go back this morning,

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therefore, to an old scribe who lived many centuries before Jesus was born. His name was Ezra. In the book of Ezra, the seventh chapter and the tenth verse, we find these words, which may well be called the "Teacher's Lesson": "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

In our sophisticated moments we are tempted to feel that men like Ezra have had their day and ceased to be, and that to talk about them is to open the casket of some poor old mummy, musty with the passing centuries. From the height of our own enlightenment we look down upon them with a strange and patronizing curiosity, but scarcely would we seek to learn from them. And yet one such statement as we have hit upon this morning immediately takes this man out of the distant and forgotten past, puts him completely abreast of our generation, and compels us to look up to him.

First of all, here was a man who believed in the importance of teaching religion. To him it was not secondary, but primary. After many years of exile Artaxerxes had authorized the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem. Their task was to reestablish themselves, to rebuild the city. To Ezra the foundation of their new life was religion. He set himself to the task of teaching it. It is neither here nor there that his religious views were narrow and exclusive, or even that his methods were at times unduly harsh, severe, and probably unwise. For really one is compelled to have more respect for the individual whose religious views may be narrow, but who is driven by abiding convictions, than for the individual who prides himself on his broad liberal views, but who never gets any further than views. A liberal outlook that never gets beyond looking is of exceedingly questionable value.

We could well ask ourselves, therefore, as we think of the future of our own nation, whether we really believe

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that its destiny depends on its religious condition. We seem to gain assurance from the fact that our country was founded on religious principles. So it was. It was a religious urge that brought the Pilgrims across the sea. The Puritans, whatever else we may say of them, had the fear of God in their hearts. We are greatly comforted by such thoughts. But such thoughts furnish poor comfort. For what is the use of a foundation if one does not build on it? One of the sad revelations of the war was the distressing ignorance of full-grown men regarding the most elementary facts of our religious life. There is something basically wrong with the attitude of mind that expresses growing concern for all the paraphernalia of life, and apathy toward the right understanding and living of life itself. It is our task to try to free our age from this "pathetic fallacy."

But how shall we go about it? Let all those who feel the weight of this obligation, share also the insight of this man, and the wisdom of his procedure. Here we are, a group of church people anxious to teach religion to our youth. How are we to do it? I do not see how we can improve on Ezra's procedure. It is the only one that will ever work as far as the teaching of religion is concerned. To be sure his technique may have been poor. He probably knew nothing of graded lessons nor of adolescent psychology. We should be most grateful for the improved methods that are at our disposal. There is always a danger, however, of mistaking a proper method, which is merely a means, for the end to be achieved. A proper technique is not a substitute for the content of our effort. I read recently of a young man who had taken his Ph.D. in religious education. He concluded his first sermon in the pulpit to which he had been called with this prayer, "O Lord, improve our technique." Some of us today act as if there were something potent in our modern phraseology. Incidentally it, too, will no doubt become obsolete. We cannot make a

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religious vocabulary a substitute for a religious experience "Men use a new terminology and believe themselves to be masters of a new truth." It is because I believe that Ezra's method reveals a truth which, while it can be supplemented, cannot be superseded, that I ask you to examine it again. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Let us look at these steps.

The first thing that this man who wanted to teach religion did was to prepare his heart. A thought-provoking statement! He seems to suggest that in teaching religion the teacher takes precedence over the lesson. We should have expected him to say that he prepared his sermon, or his lesson, but he surprises us. He tells us that he prepared himself, his heart.

His statement is arresting. We cannot lightly dismiss it. Its insight is profound. Dr. Jefferson, in one of his books, even goes so far as to suggest that a minister ought to spend more time on himself than he does on his sermon. Ezra prepared himself. Before John Wesley had passed through that crisis in his religious development which proved to be the birth pangs of a vastly more fruitful ministry, we hear him saying, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh! who shall convert me?" Who has not had such searchings of heart?

We are living in an age that is very impatient with the thought of preparation, especially self-preparation. Our age is bent upon getting results, but is very reluctant to share in processes, particularly the processes that call for self-discipline. Religion itself is being affected by this spirit. Self-preparation suggests time, and we think we have no time. Self-preparation suggests not simply activity, but passivity. It suggests not action, but meditation, reflection, prayer, poise, peace. We would rather go for the Lord than wait upon the Lord, and we do go, but the trouble is that often we do not carry much. Jesus went about his Father's

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business, but before he went he spent forty days in the wilderness. He was not wasting time, he was preparing himself. Paul was anxious to go on his great evangelistic journeys, but before he went he spent three years in the desert of Arabia. He was not wasting time; he was preparing himself. No wonder he wrote urging his young comrade Timothy to become a "vessel . . . meet for the Master's use. . . ."

Ezra prepared his heart. This preparation took two forms. We read that "Ezra had set his heart upon studying the Law of God" and "upon obeying it." His preparation of himself, therefore, was twofold—first, intellectual, and second, moral.

The teacher of religion today, in the church school, in the pulpit, or wherever he may be, should try to equip himself as best he may intellectually for his task. The church has sometimes acted as if there was something particularly pious or religious about ignorance. But that is not so. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy . . . mind." A recent historian, in speaking of the effect of the church on British civilization, referred to it as a "mind-forming society." Dr. Coffin suggests that "it is this which we must again make the church in our time." An institution which has been the source of education, the mother of schools and colleges, and which professes to possess the truth which makes men free, must not be guilty of obscurantism.

Never was there a time when the intellectual preparation of a teacher of religion was more necessary than now. The unprecedented spread of secular knowledge has been most embarrassing for religious teachers. The whole approach to religion has shifted from one of the authority of tradition to a fearless quest of truth. The teacher of religion today must acquaint himself with what is involved in this change of outlook if he would be prepared adequately to meet the religious needs of his age. Not only so, but these

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very students whom we teach on Sunday have been exposed during the week to high-class teaching in the day schools. They should not be made to feel a terrible let-down on Sunday morning. Such an effect inevitably cheapens religion in their minds. A man cannot teach geometry to a class of boys unless he knows more about geometry than they do. No more can he teach religion. No church-school teacher who postpones the preparation of his lesson till the last minute is being fair either to himself or to those whom he seeks to teach. The best that you and I can do as preachers and teachers of religion is poor enough. It should not be made poorer through lack of industry or earnestness on our part.

If you meet your class on Sunday morning, particularly a class of young people, and give them the impression—they will get the impression, whether you want to give it to them or not—that you have not thought much about the lesson before you got there, and really do not quite know what it is all about, the effect upon that class will be quite demoralizing. It would be much better had you not met them at all. There are some things in life that it is better not to do at all if one is not willing to try to do his best with them. And the teaching of religion is one such thing.

We turn now to the other part of his discipline—to obey the law, to do it. This man's preparation was not only intellectual, but moral. There is, I think, a difference between teaching religion and teaching mathematics, history, science, and such related subjects. This is due to two causes—first, to the nature of religion itself. It is essentially an art. Teaching religion, therefore, is not an abstract procedure, but a most personal thing. It is not so much "taught" as it is "caught." It does not come out of the air; it comes out of a life. It is not enough that one has good brushes, good paints, or even a good subject. One may have all these things and yet create nothing. It is not enough that one holds in his hand an expensive and sen-

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sitive instrument. The music must be in his soul before he can bring it out of his violin. Religion is not mechanical; it is creative, and nothing creative comes to birth apart from a creator. Religion is not the verbal repetition of a creed, as one would repeat a multiplication table. It is rather the testimony of an experience that we seek to share and thus to communicate. Religion is first and last and all the time personal, warm, contagious, or it is nothing. We do not learn it from books; we learn it from life. And so Ezra prepared his heart to obey the law.

Our great lesson is, after all, our life. "Come let us preach in the city today," said St. Francis of Assisi to one of his young followers. They went to the city, walking and talking together, and finally returned to the monastery. "Father," said one of the young monks, "when do we begin to preach?" "My son," replied St. Francis, "we have been preaching; we have been seen . . . it is no use walking anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk." Paul was expressing a timeless truth when he wrote to the Christians at Corinth, "Ye are our epistles—known and read of all men." A student at Harvard once said, "It is easy for me to believe, when Dr. Peabody reads the Ten Commandments, that God wrote them with his own hand on the tables of stone." Religion is not something that is merely grasped by the brain; it is, to use Gandhi's expression, a "heart grasp." It is one thing to study religion, and it is another thing to be religious. The truth must be incarnate before we can communicate it. The word must be made flesh.

"And so the Word had breath and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought."

To be sure, all teachers of any subject teach with their lives. Some one has said that your education is what you

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have left after you have forgotten all that you have learned. Surely one of the things that remain is the influence of the instructors whom we have loved and respected. But this is especially true of teachers of religion. It is quite possible to be a good teacher of physics and yet not a good man, but it is utterly impossible in religion to divorce one's teaching from one's life, for the simple reason that religion is life. We cannot give our intellect and withhold our emotions. There are no people on earth to whom Emerson's words are more apt, than to teachers and preachers of religion: "What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary." It was Emerson, too, who cited this remark once made to him, "I don't care so much for what they say as I do for what makes them say it." Ezra lived many years before Emerson, but he, too, had discovered this truth. And so he prepared his heart to obey, to live the truths he tried to teach.

As church-school teachers you will inform your children of Christ's love for the individual. You will tell them that matchless parable about the ninety and nine—how the Good Shepherd left the ninety and nine and went after the one sheep that had gone astray. If one pupil in your class is absent for a Sunday or two Sundays, and you do not take the trouble to visit him in his home and find out the reason for his absence, your children will not believe what you tell them. You will teach them more by one Christlike act than by volumes of words. You may teach your children the value of promptness, but if you yourself have developed the tardy habit, they won't hear what you say. You may teach them the value of the church. No church-school teacher should feel that he has really succeeded until the lives he has touched have joined in the larger fellowship of the church. You may teach them these great truths, but if you yourself do not support the church

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and take no interest in it, they will not be likely to believe what you tell them.

Many parents are in an anomalous position. They are very desirous that their children should be taught religion, that they should attend the church, but they themselves take no interest in religion. Such people are fooling no one on earth but themselves.

The observation that Carlyle once made finds well-nigh universal confirmation. Said he, "My kind mother . . . did me one altogether invaluable service: she taught me, less indeed by word than by act and daily reverent look and habitude, her own simple version of the Christian faith. . . . The highest whom I knew on Earth I here saw bowed down . . . before a Higher in Heaven." One fancies that the so-called "problem of youth" would be well on its way to solution could only our homes put about our youth an atmosphere of reverence and of faith. Unless we can check the secularization of our American home life, the prospect is alarming.

Now there is another reason why religion cannot be taught abstractly, but must be communicated through personality, and that is not only because of the peculiar nature of religion, but also because of the end which religious instruction has in view. In teaching secular subjects, our primary duty is to impart information. In teaching religion that is not the end of our duty; it is only the beginning. Our supreme duty is to mold and fashion lives.

Dr. Forsyth, in his Yale lectures on Preaching, says that the work of a minister "is not to enlighten simply, but to empower and enhance. Men as they leave him should be not only clearer but greater, not only surer but stronger, not only interested, nor only instructed, nor only affected, but fed and increased." He reminds us that we must not think of preaching as "something said with more or less force," but as "something done with more or less power." Dr. Richard Roberts expresses the same thought when he

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says, "That is not preaching which is not preaching for a verdict." Since the end of all religious instruction is not to get a hearing simply, but a following, not to make people religiously sophisticated but religious, obviously life is the channel through which truth is imparted.

It is hardly necessary to say that the insight of Ezra has found its highest embodiment in the Supreme Teacher. He spoke with authority because what he said, he was. He not only points the way to eternal life. He is the way. "Follow me." "Learn of me." To know Christ is not only to be informed, but to be inspired. When we come into contact with him, we are not only enlightened; we are enlivened. This is because his life is the light of men.

Herein lies the hope of the Gospel. Men are won to it not because it seems reasonable. Its truths are couched in paradoxes which have never seemed reasonable to our way of thinking. Rather its power lies in the fact that we can make it real. The preaching of the Gospel may sound like "foolishness," but the picture of a man sitting in a Roman prison, awaiting martyrdom because of his loyalty to truth, that is not foolishness. Here we face reality.

This, then, is the challenge of our task. It is most difficult. But it is not impossible.

"Snagged barbs, snarled lines,
Torn sails! What fishers we!
Teach us thy skill
O Man of Galilee."

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"It is hard enough to make one Christian, harder still to make a Christian church. To make a Christian nation is a task to stagger the imagination; to make a Christian world may well seem all but impossible. Yet this, no less, is the goal which our religion sets us."

—WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN.

VII

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

—Mark xvi:15.

Some people have traveled around the world and yet remain amazingly provincial and insular in their social outlook. Jesus never traveled. He never took a ship across the Mediterranean, nor did he ever go on any long journey which took him to remote countries. He spent his life within very circumscribed geographical limits. But his physical limitations seem to have enhanced rather than diminished the breadth of his vision and the catholicity of his spirit. He completely demolished the narrow and provincial concept of a Jewish kingdom with the wide sweep of his gospel of the Kingdom of God. To the narrowness of contemporary religion he brought breadth; to its selfish complacency, a challenge. To the idea of a gospel forever limited by racial and geographical boundaries he presented a picture of a world-encompassing gospel. “Many shall come from the east and west,” he said, “and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. . . .” Paul was only expressing the true spirit of his master when he prophesied that in the Kingdom there would be “neither Greek nor Jew . . . barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,” but one brotherhood. It is evident then that Jesus thought of his gospel in world terms, hence we are not surprised to hear his final word, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

In the presence of such a text as this one may very well

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be dismayed. Obviously no more comprehensive, daring statement could have been uttered by the Master—"all the world—every creature." The challenge is indeed a staggering one. But we cannot side-step it. The missionary task to which the Gospel calls us cannot be regarded as something foreign or artificial. It is not an after-thought. It is, on the contrary, inseparably connected with the very nature and purpose of the Christian Gospel.

Now let it be said at the outset that there are many who are quite indifferent to the missionary program of the church. Let us consider some of their arguments. One seems to be this: *Charity begins at home.* Behold the needs of our own country! See how un-Christian we are. Why should we send missionaries thousands of miles away to preach the Gospel, when at our very doors are millions still unreached?

To be sure there is truth in the observation. For as we shall have occasion to say in another connection, there is probably no greater handicap to the outreach of Christianity today than the un-Christian condition of "Christian" countries. We cannot send a light that we do not have. It is now quite evident that paganism has little to do with geography, and that some of the "heathen" seem to possess qualities more Christlike than those revealed by many of the enlightened. Just for this reason the time has passed for arbitrary or compartmentalized thinking. "The field is the world." "Home" and "foreign" are titles that are rapidly losing their age-long connotations.

Moreover, the argument is thoroughly inconsistent. We do not apply it in business. American business men do not say, "There are still undeveloped business opportunities at home; why should we go abroad for foreign trade?" Rather, decades ago, even before we had approached our present highly developed business life, when there were more opportunities in America, and competition here was not nearly so keen as it now is, business interests were

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seeking foreign markets. In business the motto has always been, "The field is the world."

Another argument against Christian missions has grown out of our study of comparative religions. There was a time when Christian people used to feel that the Christian religion was all right, and other religions were all wrong; that we had all the truth and they all the error. To be sure, we still believe that our religion is the truth, but we have been compelled to adopt a more sympathetic and appreciative attitude toward non-Christian faiths. We now frankly admit that there are certain points of excellence in other religions. Why should there not be? Some one has well asked, "Do you suppose God would have spoken volumes to Moses, and not even whispered to old Confucius?" After all, long before Jesus came, men had been seeking God, and certainly their quests could not have been in vain. They had discovered, independently of Christianity, some truth. Consequently some people are saying, "Why should we give Christianity to the Chinese, Indians, Africans, and the rest, when they have their own religion, indigenous to their soil and to their nature, and probably better suited to their needs?"

To be sure there is truth in this argument, also. But one feels like asking, "At what period of Christian history could not this argument have been used?" Suppose it had been used on us? Do we not need to remind ourselves that we are the product of the missionary enterprise? Dr. E. Stanley Jones, who recently sailed back to India, reminded us, before sailing, of the words of Servius, a Roman, who, in referring to our ancestors, said, "The stupidest and ugliest slaves in the market are those from Britain," and St. Jerome, writing in the fourth century, said, "I well remember the Scots in Gaul; they were eaters of human flesh; they had plenty of flocks and herds, but they preferred the ham of the herdsman or a steak from the female breast as a variety." Another Roman, seeing some of these

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slaves in the market, said, "Angles, Angles, if they could be Christianized they would be angels." St. Augustine began this work in the sixth century. He started out to Britain to christianize our Saxon forefathers. One can hear the argument put to Augustine: "Why take the Gospel to the Saxons? They have their own religion. They are happy and as well off as we are." But Augustine went, and I fancy we are glad he did.

So much for objections.

There are certain movements, however, that objections or arguments do not seem to stop, and Christian missions is one; for "in the work of human redemption this movement has many critics, but no rivals." Democracy is another. People have been preaching and writing from time immemorial against democracy. But the world replies by becoming more democratic. People have been arguing from time immemorial against missions, but the church replies by becoming more missionary. Missions are growing. It is reported that the contributions of the Baptist denomination, for example, for its first year of missionary effort, were \$1,239.00, and for the first ten years only \$73,000.00. In 1930 the Northern Baptists alone actually raised, including legacies, for missionary purposes, \$6,430,855.78. Arguments to the contrary, missions have been growing.

The remarkable thing is that the church has accepted literally this command of Christ. One may unhesitatingly say that there is no more gripping, heroic, and thrilling story in all literature than that which recounts the rise and the spread of Christian missions. Dr. Cornelius H. Patton, in his illuminating book, *The Business of Missions*, refers to missions as a "going concern."

Now this growth of Christian missions in the past and in the modern world cannot be due to a "happenstance." Mere chance or opportunism could never account for such persistent and continued effort. The very caliber of some of the men who go as our missionaries indicates that some

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truly great motive lies behind this movement. For some of our finest men do go. Not so very long ago a large company of new missionaries were on their way to Japan, Korea, China, and the Philippines. One day two ladies were sitting in their deck chairs and discussing their fellow passengers, when one of them said, "There are a number of missionaries on board." "How do you know?" asked her friend. "I recognize them by a certain badge they wear." The other lady recognized this badge as being the Phi Beta Kappa key which had been bestowed upon the majority of the group. One is not saying too much when he says that some of our finest religious leaders have been and are in missionary work. Why do they go?

As one seeks to examine the causes that have undergirded, and still underlie our missionary effort, at least two settled convictions suggest themselves as being a part of the deep out of which these tides of missionary effort have come, and do come.

One of those things is the belief which, rightly or wrongly, Christian people have always held, namely that the truths of Christianity should gain universal acceptance. When one speaks of Christianity as a religion that should become universal he arouses very honest objections. Surely, in saying this, one is not implying that there is nothing good or true or beautiful in other religions. The day for such bigotry has passed. He is rather saying that the best in other religions is found in Christianity, and in addition something more which other faiths do not possess.

And what is that something more? In a word, it is Christ—Christ who comes not to destroy, but to fulfill. Let me say that I am not interested that we should take to other lands our Western civilization. The world would be a good deal better off if we did not export certain phases of it. Nor am I concerned that we should take our modern ecclesiastical machinery. In fact, I am very much concerned that we should not. I do not believe that our first job is

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to make Chinese, Scotch Presbyterians; Hindus, Episcopilians; or Japanese, Baptists. Nor, if I understand aright the thought of these people, do they particularly want our Western labels. At the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh, in 1910, a Chinese Christian arose and said, "We Chinese are not interested in your Western denominations." And twelve years later, at the Shanghai Conference, another Chinese leader, Rev. C. Y. Cheng, began an argument against our Western denominations in these words, "We Chinese Christians, who represent the various leading denominations, express our regret that we are divided by the denominationalism which comes from the west. . . . Denominationalism, instead of being a source of inspiration, has been and is a source of confusion, bewilderment, and inefficiency."

One cannot lightly pass by such sober language as that. It is in itself convincing argument for the universal nature of the Christian Gospel. From the day of Pentecost till now each is able to express in his own tongue the wonderful works of God. Well might the modern church in its missionary enterprise take as its goal the simple and noble purpose which dominated the London Missionary Society when it came into being, namely, "To send neither Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or Independency to the heathen, but simply the Gospel of Christ." It is not, therefore, that we feel that our particular interpretation of the Gospel is universal; it most certainly is not; but, rather, that the One whom we are interpreting is. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." It is not the vessel that men need, but the treasure.

I can see no reason for any enthusiasm in Christian missions apart from the fact that Christ belongs to the whole world. "Around the Son of Man the sons of men can gather and find in Him the brotherhood." We possess something which belongs to everybody. He was brought to us by another race, and we must pass Him on. To be sure,

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without this impulse, Christian missions would still be of value from a purely cultural point of view. We study to-day the other religions of the world because our knowledge of them broadens our sympathies and enriches our culture. In like manner we could inform other peoples of our religion, to enrich their culture. But we need to remind ourselves that the motive which sent those pioneer missionaries to distant parts, to endure unthinkable hardships, was not that they might enrich the world's culture, but rather that they might change the world's life. They went to preach the Gospel of One whom they thoroughly believed was indeed and in truth "the light of the world." Without that belief the missionary cause must lag.

There is another motive that prompts us to go into all the world and preach to every creature. And that is the belief that Christ is the very best that the West has, and we should give our best, not our worst.

In a certain sense it is perfectly unnecessary to ask people today to be missionary in their spirit. The truth is that this is the most missionary age the world has ever seen. We are constantly sending missionaries. Literally hundreds of them go to other lands every year, preaching their Gospel, and supported by their constituents. The only question is, "What kind of missionaries are we sending and what kind of gospel are they preaching?"

Think, for example, of the missionaries of Commercial Amusements. I am told by those who live in other lands that frequently the moving-picture films shown in the Orient are those that could not pass our American Board of Censorship! One does not need to allow his imagination to linger very long on this thought to realize with what aspects of our Western life other lands are becoming familiar, nor the kind of gospel that these missionaries are preaching. It is a painful fact that with those aspects of our Western civilization of which we are least proud the world is becoming increasingly familiar.

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Or take our missionaries of trade. "There is no talk of 'isolation' when it comes to sewing-machines, to typewriters, to tobacco, wheat and oil." We are reminded that, on the authority of consular reports during 1919, one new American firm, on the average, arrived in Shanghai per day! William E. Johnson reminds us in a recent article that under American administration the liquor traffic in the Philippines has developed by leaps and bounds. "In the last five years the consumption of domestic liquors alone has increased by an average of 1,000,000 liters per year. The San Miguel Brewery," he continues, "has become the most powerful organization on the island. The prison population for years has increased annually by about three hundred fifty convicts. There was little or no liquor traffic before the American occupation, except among the Spaniards and foreign residents." A painful reflection, this, on Christian America! Recently forty Filipino leaders gathered in Manila to talk the matter over, and as a result formed an organization to fight this illicit and terrible traffic, whose source is our own Christian country.

Missionaries? We do not lack them. The only question is, what kind of missionaries are they, and what gospel are they preaching? Dr. Fosdick said some time ago, "Most of the influences which come out of Western lands to inspire young China are frankly irreligious."

Surely no sober student of our Western civilization will deny that the greatest values of our civilization have sprung from the life and teachings of Jesus; nor can it be doubted that the most wholesome and helpful contacts that we make with other lands grow out of those personal relationships established by our missionaries. They go not to get, but to give; not for personal gain, but for social good. They have established schools and colleges. They educate. They have built hospitals which minister to the sick. They have taught modern methods in farming. They are messengers of mercy. They have won the confidence of those

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to whom they minister, and their good will. They are Christian missionaries, taking the best our civilization has to offer, not its worst.

The testimony of a governor of the Punjab, Sir William Mackworth Young, is one of several similar tributes that might be mentioned. He writes: "I ask myself what has been the most potent influence which has been working among the people since annexation—fifty-four years ago—and to that question I feel there is but one answer: Christianity, as set forth in the lives and teachings of Christian missionaries. If the natives of India have any practical knowledge of what is meant by Christian charity, if they know anything of high, disinterested motives and self-sacrifice, it is mainly from the missionaries that they learn it." Or listen to this other tribute by Professor Mukerjee, a prominent Indian Christian leader. He says: "The missionary has played a very important part in the life of the people of India in almost its every phase. . . . He has thus proved himself to be the biggest educative factor. The missionary, again, has come into the closest possible contact with the masses—the depressed classes, the untouchables . . . and day by day he is trying to bring the sunshine of comfort and peace into their lives. He has thereby proved himself to be the biggest elevating factor."

Surely the church cannot allow such an enterprise to suffer. But we frequently do. Often we have had to recall missionaries because we could not support them. We have had to retreat from fields that we once occupied. We have volunteers waiting to go, but no money to send them. Can it be that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light?"

The CHURCH, the LIGHT of the WORLD

“Churches will survive the mistakes they make in trying to help their fellows; what they will not survive is the attitude of detachment when the destinies of peoples are in the balance.”

—CHARLES SILVESTER HORNE.

VIII

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

—Matthew v:14.

Our thought has led us to consider the church. Whatever may be the shortcomings of institutionalized Christianity it remains true that to the church, more than to any other single institution, is intrusted the task of which we have been speaking.

According to our records on only two occasions did Jesus use the word "church"—once to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." When one thinks of the strife and divisions for which that text has given a pretext, one feels like saying that Jesus used the word too often! Moreover, from what we know of the spirit of Jesus, cannot we confidently say that, could he have foreseen that the rock which he suggested as the basis of Christian fellowship would have become the obstacle against which that fellowship lies broken, he would not have used that word at all?

Fortunately there are less controversial metaphors than the "rock" which Jesus used to describe the nature and purpose of Christian fellowship. Through no ingenuity can these be shunted on the tracks of theological controversy. Unfortunately, the church has always been more easily excited by theological issues than by the moral and ethical tasks of its time. But these were the tasks that Jesus held uppermost. No doubt it was the relationships of his followers to such tasks that he had in mind when he said

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to them, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid."

Now there is on the surface little resemblance between the church of the first century, with its simple organization and freedom, and the modern institutionalized church with its elaborate ecclesiastical machinery. Similarly, there is outwardly not much in common between the world of the first century with its simple methods, its limited technique, and the modern world, complicated and mechanized. But it remains forever true that "the things that are not seen are eternal." "The church" and "the world" still represent two distinct tempers which we find it impossible to ignore and difficult to resolve. It is to this difference in spirit that we must turn.

For, mark you, there is a difference. Jesus uses as striking a word as "light," which suggests its opposite, "darkness." To be sure, some of the church has gone into the world, and some of the world has come into the church. The words as commonly used are no longer mutually exclusive, for "the business of ethical accountancy is not easily susceptible to neat arrangement." Granted. But the more we study the life of Jesus, the more we are aware that in his relationship to the world he affords not so much comparison as contrast. He brings us not another thing, but a different thing. He offers not just life, but eternal life; not meat, but meat that the world knows not of. He comes not to enrich our material store, but to reveal the treasures that are beyond the reach of decay.

Nowhere is this distinction more clearly drawn than in his intercessory prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel. He was facing squarely the fact of his departure from the disciples. He knew that upon them would rest the responsibility of the truths he had taught and lived. He was leaving them in an unfriendly and hostile world. He prays for them. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they

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are thine. . . . They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." And as if to make it plain that his thoughts were directed not simply to his immediate followers, he adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here, then, is something different. "I am the light of the world." "Ye are the light of the world."

Now surely the relationship of which we are speaking is a most difficult one. To try to live by the light of Christian principles in a world that is organized largely along un-Christian lines is no simple matter. We read that there were saints in Cæsar's household, but one fancies that they did not have an easy time of it. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that the church, in trying to be in the world but not of it, is in constant danger of running into one of two errors. Each of these false positions contains some truth, but in neither one of them can the church be true to its own distinctive nature and mission. Let me illustrate.

On the one hand, the church, in trying to be not of the world, has often acted as if it were not in the world. It has regarded the world as being essentially in a hopeless state. Its chief business then becomes that of issuing passports to another world, or, to change the figure, lifeboats to men on a sinking ship. Thus have we sung,

"I'm but a stranger here;
Heaven is my home.
Earth is a desert drear;
Heaven is my home."

One fears this does not unfairly represent the attitude of many even today. Let statesmen solve the problem of war. Let politicians deal with national and international issues. Leave industrial evils to employers, and racial conflicts to sociologists. Be careful! Our business is to spread the Gospel!!

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But what kind of Gospel could we preach? Surely not the Gospel of him who stood "where cross the crowded ways of life." Not the Gospel of him who, when he saw the bewildered multitude, was moved with compassion and wept over the city; who stood foursquare against the evils of his day until their very force engulfed him. No, this is a travesty on the Gospel. A ridiculous caricature! A church that adopts this attitude merely confesses its moral, ethical impotence. We cannot escape our responsibility by washing our hands.

The other error which we should avoid is this. In trying to be in the world we become of it. Truly Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world," but we are in danger of acting as if he meant a tail-light!

That the critics of the church are justified in saying that this is precisely the function that religion has often fulfilled is a sad truth. Too often has the church given divine sanction to a *status quo* that is decidedly un-Christian. Have we not blessed war? Have we not at times stood on the wrong side of industrial disputes? Have we not through a blind party loyalty supported little men whose qualification for office was some such selfish slogan as "America first"? We have been guilty of misplacing the light. But when we do that we inevitably stand in the rear. For the light of which Jesus was speaking was one to shine "before" men. It is to blaze the trail, not to guard the procession.

The danger that the church shall become so much a part of the life of the age that it will no longer be able to stand off and rebuke it, is of course a real and ever-present one. Mr. Chesterton has a story about a sensitive artist who in his daily walks had to pass an ugly house. The sight of it constantly jarred him. He therefore solved the problem by buying the house and moving into it! In like manner, we may allow ourselves to become subjectively accommodated to the defects of our time and thus lose the

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capacity to be shocked and moved by them. But when this capacity goes the light goes out. It becomes darkness. For the Gospel of Jesus in the modern world is not supposed to be an anesthetic. It is an irritant. "He stirreth up the people," said the enemies of Jesus. But if we "marry the mind" of our time, we shall become a part of the very moral inertia which it is the God-given purpose of our Gospel to upset. Dean Sperry states the matter clearly when he says, "What we have lost is that which religion requires, the perpetual suggestion of a saving contrast. There is not enough difference in our lives to give us that correction and help that religion, when it is at its best, provides. . . . Liberal Protestantism cannot discharge its religious duty to the time merely by lending its pious sanction and support to what is best in the spirit of this age: it must say plainly, with conviction, and if need be with courage, what the age is leaving unsaid."

Now let me hasten to say that I am not trying to give the impression that the modern church in its attitude to the world occupies either one or the other of the positions of which we have been speaking. Decidedly not! This is what the critics of religion in general and of the church in particular usually fail to see. They tell us that religion is either an escape from reality or an opiate for its ills. They fail to see that there are sections of the church, small, perhaps, but, thank God, growing, that are conscientiously trying to bring the light of the Gospel to the ills of modern life. They are trying to say "what the age is leaving unsaid."

And what is the age leaving unsaid? What is the distinctive message and ministry of the church to the world?

To answer the question we need only to look again at him whose life is the light of men. As he thought of the world, his attitude was neither escape nor approval. He was rather mastered by a passion. It was the passion of redemption. This became and remained his controlling

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motive. He was not like a weathercock, at the mercy of every chance breeze. He was not a thermometer rising and falling with the temper of his time. Rather he steered his course by a fixed star from which he never deviated. As a lad he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" In his maturity he said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "It is finished." And how can the nature of his work be better expressed than in his own words, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"? Is not this the light that he has given us?

Now it is obviously impossible within the limits of this space even to suggest the tremendous truths that are involved in such a statement. For the present I merely want to remind you of how this redemptive purpose actually controlled the life of Jesus. Does not his temptation provide an illustration? We are told that he was offered the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. He refused them. But surely not because he was other-worldly. His impulse was not asceticism. It was the impulse of creative heroism. It was redemption. He gave up personal gain for social good; the immediate for the ultimate. He looked beyond actualities to possibilities. In short he did not approve of the world that was, because he was lured by the thought of what it might become. Consequently he would accept as final no condition that violated this God-given insight.

Now if there is anything that distinguishes "the church" from "the world," should it not be this, that the church is that section of humanity that tries to live creatively, redemptively? The observation is frequently made by those who are not members of the church that there are just as good people outside the church as there are within. While this is always more of an excuse than a reason for indifference to Christian fellowship, still there is no doubt truth in the remark. But such a test is quite inadequate. For by

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what do we estimate goodness? There are few of us who would not confess with the apostles of old, "We also are men with natures like your own." But the apostles did not stop there. They went on to say this: "We are bringing you good tidings that you are to turn from these empty things to the living God. . . ." This is something different! Goodness of itself is not enough. One must be good for something. The Gospel of Jesus is more than a personal preservative from the world's contamination. When we are true to its deepest insight, it furnishes a passion, and with that a power that takes us far beyond the shallows and into the deep.

How clearly is this seen in the lives of the apostles! They were not perfect men. No doubt there were other men that were as good. But there was power in the goodness of the apostles! Their enemies accused them of turning the world upside down. Nicodemus did not do that, nor the rich young ruler, nor Zacchaeus. But these were all good men. The early apostles were, indeed, a light in the world. They stood out against their age and rebuked it. They had to obey God rather than men. They confessed that they were earthen vessels, but they guarded a treasure. In a word, they shared the redemptive purpose of Christ. Hence the world might oppose them, abuse them, imprison or stone them, but it simply could not ignore them.

Is there anything that should occasion us more sober thinking than the fact that the church, which in its early days possessed such vigor, courage, and passion, has cooled off? Once, to be a professed follower of Christ was really to run a risk. Now how safe we are! But in saving our life, might we not be losing it? For how does the world regard the church today? Its attitude is not hostility. It is indifference. It does not oppose the church. It ignores the church!

That attitude speaks volumes. A church that makes so little difference that it can be ignored by the world, is a

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church whose light is dim. There is no greater need today than that of relighting our torches at the source of light. We shall have to go back before we shall be able to go forward. Seemingly we make progress when we drift with the current. But it is progress toward sea level only. The position in which Jesus placed his church was that of "a city that is set on a hill." It would compel the attention of the world. Men would see it, and when they saw it they would know that they were in the presence of a force for personal and social righteousness with which they had to reckon. If we merely gear ourselves into the current of the world's thinking, we shall be prosperous. But we shall be powerless. We shall "succeed." But succeed in doing what?

The final measure of the church's success is its ability to bear aloft the light that Christ has intrusted to it, the light of a truth that redeems. We have grown accustomed to regard what is customary as if it were right. It is customary to go to war, but it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. It is customary for members of one race to regard other races as if they were "common and unclean," but it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. It is customary for us to think that the making of profits, even to the extent of entailing human suffering and woe, is legitimate and right, but it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. It is customary for citizens to be devotees of a nationalism that is bigoted and conceited, but it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. What "success" could we offer to compensate for our failure to take our stand on these and similar issues?

To try to view the things that are, in the light of the redemptive program of Jesus will bring the church again in conflict with the world. But every creative period of the church's life has been a period of conflict. ". . . Battle, not battlements, is her sure shield." Protestantism may seem hopelessly divided for such a task. It speaks not with one but many voices. But really, do not our divisions center around the lamp? How could we be divided about the

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light? The truth seems to be that we have placed so much emphasis on the lamp that the attention of the world has been diverted from the light. In this we have not only been mistaken. We have at times been positively sinful. We have made denominational labels the measuring-rods of truths which can be realized solely by the test of life. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said Jesus. Not by their foliage.

One is not suggesting that our doctrinal views are unimportant or superfluous. That would be sheer folly. But the plain truth is that it is the life that is the light of men. If we could experience that unity of spirit and of purpose that comes from facing our common task, the things that now seem barriers to our fellowship would disappear. They would disappear not because we should all agree about them, but because we should all agree that they are not big enough to be made the issue. We should find a larger loyalty, and thus a more inclusive fellowship by seriously undertaking the redemptive work of Jesus.

It is to the demands which this task makes upon our life that we now turn our thoughts.

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"It is no unworthy thing to wish to count for something and to do a great work in the world; but we shall count in the final audit not by the measure of our capacity, our business, our energy, but of the tenacity and vitality of our faith and our love."

—RICHARD ROBERTS.

"In some strange and mystical way, Calvary is in the geography of the infinite, and the crucifixion is in the calendar of the timeless."

—EDWIN HOLT HUGHES.

IX

“. . . He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

—Luke ix:51.

We have seen that the thing that separates the church from the world is the fact that the church is heir to a great mission. When it is true to the light of its Gospel it regards the world not simply as something to be used, possessed, or enjoyed, but to be redeemed. This redemptive enterprise makes the church the Light of the World. However partial may be the church's loyalty to this ideal, the fact is that without it the church would lose its goal and with that its power. The thought of making the kingdoms of this world, “the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,” exerts an influence that cannot be measured.

But what does it mean to be true to this redemptive purpose that Christ has revealed? To his own life we turn for an answer to this question. “And it came to pass when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

Apparently this was not an easy journey. Had it been so it would not have demanded such steadfastness and determination. There can be no doubt that for Jerusalem Jesus had a deep and lasting love. And yet on this occasion the very thing he loved he feared. The very thing that drew him repelled him. While hundreds of his fellow countrymen were approaching Jerusalem with light hearts and happy faces, he had to “set his face like a flint” to go on that memorable journey.

The reason, of course, is plain. Jesus remembered how

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Jerusalem had treated its prophets, and therefore knew what awaited him there. "It cannot be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem."

"Lovely to the outward eye
Seemed Jerusalem to lie—
Yet 'twas there thou cam'st to die,
Jesus, Son of Mary.

Far-brought stones and marble rare
Made its towers and circuits fair,
Yet thy cross was waiting there
Wearied Son of Mary."

It is an impressive truth that when men of prophetic insight attempted to describe the expected redeemer, most frequently they did so in language strangely suggestive of a cross. Familiar passages come to our minds. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "... He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." To be sure there is another side to the picture. "... And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." But his is no cheap glory. It is to be won through a love that suffers in order to redeem.

Now without raising any critical questions as to Messiahship, let us simply say that for multitudes the world over Jesus has fulfilled these ancient expectations. He was made "perfect through suffering." His name is above every name, because he "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." In short, he is "The Light of the World," but the light shines from a cross. "He reigns from the tree."

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This fact, naturally enough, has cast a shadow over the life of Christ. For however hard we try, our reason falters before such a paradox. Through no logical process of thought, can gain through loss, victory through defeat, or life through death, seem anything but irrational. No wonder that to the Jews the cross was a "stumbling-block" and to the Greeks "foolishness." To the unsympathetic observer in the first century or the twentieth it can be nothing more. The meaning of the cross is revealed not to those who look at it, but through it. To those, in other words, who share the insight that sent Jesus to Jerusalem.

Why did he go? Let us say emphatically that he did not go because he loved suffering. No normal person does. This is an obvious enough truth, and yet that we have failed to see it is quite evident.

"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean,
The world has grown grey with thy breath!"

Nothing could be further from the truth. Art, too, has misrepresented Jesus. On the assumption that we are following Christ's example, we have often been guilty of very morbid and unwholesome attitudes and practices. In a word, the Gospel to many people is not good news, but very mournful tidings. Christ is to us the "Man of Sorrows" who is "acquainted with grief."

So he was. But Calvary has an eastern as well as a western slope. It not only shelters the shadows. It greets the dawn. In other words, to view the sufferings of Jesus apart from the light of the exalted purpose by which he lived is to see them partially. That purpose was the redemption of the world. Why redemptive love invariably suffers is one of the mysteries hidden in the very nature of God. It is enough to say that to see the cross of Jesus in the light of that deathless love for others that sent him to it, removes from his grief all that is gloomy, morbid, and depressing, and makes the cross in deed and in truth the "Light that

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follows all our way." ". . . If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But when it was not possible, he, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. . . ."

"There are brilliant heights of sorrow
That only the few may know . . ."

But if it was not a "longing for martyrdom" that lured Jesus to Jerusalem, neither did the thought of death deter him. As a matter of fact, from the point of view of caution, there was every reason why he should not have gone to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the center of opposition. It was the headquarters of both the religious and political forces that thwarted him. Here the opposition was most deeply intrenched. Nowhere was he understood less and hated more. But that was precisely why he went. Jerusalem was the place of power and influence. It was strategic! Jesus saw that and consequently would not be dissuaded. The emissaries of Herod tried to stop him, but in vain. Peter protested, but his rebuke was unavailing. Great men are not deterred by the voices of caution. Their course is determined not by the set of the wind, but by the set of the soul.

And Jesus' soul was set. His purpose was to redeem the world. Jerusalem refused his message. Preaching had failed. Persuasion had failed. Denunciation had failed. There was but one course open, namely, action. A city that refused to hear his word he would compel to face his deed. He would not allow Jerusalem to ignore him. Moral issues of the first magnitude were involved. In such situations to compromise is to lose. Jesus would not compromise. Today we are silently thanking God that he was not shaken from his resolve as he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

The cross has become the symbol of our faith. Like the altar to the Jews it occupies the central place in our worship, veiling, as it does, the "dark mystery of sacrifice." It has produced a voluminous literature. It has inspired some

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of our most beautiful hymns. The deepest moments of worship are experienced when we share the sacramental act, which Calvary has made available. No one could estimate the solace and the power which the "green hill far away," yet ever near, has had and still exerts upon numberless lives.

But are we in danger here, too, of taking a partial view of Calvary's meaning? The cross is not only historic. It is prophetic. We have worked out its theological assumptions, but have we adequately faced its sociological implications? We speak of it as a "great transaction" that is "done," but do we see its bearing on what remains to be done, and its place in the unfinished program of Christianity? One has no desire to belittle the significance of doctrine, but it can surely be said that no doctrine of the cross that hides the cross itself will save the world.

For the cross is more than an historic fact. It is the revelation of an eternal process. It is more than something that was. It is. Jerusalem is not simply a physical location. It is a moral and spiritual condition which still makes, as of old, its ceaseless demands upon redemptive love. The truth is that it still costs to redeem the world. In the economy of God this price does not fluctuate. Jesus has not "paid it all" in the sense that he spares us the experience of heroic and sacrificial living. He is more than a substitute. He is an example. Too often, as another has reminded us, we have been tempted to leave it all "To one great priestly act, one baptism, one cup of woe, though at the heart of all our worship are the words, 'Drink ye all of it.'" He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. Shall we cautiously turn our heads away?

That Jesus expected his disciples to face Jerusalem is evident. Have we caught the full significance of those words that Luke records in one of the post-resurrection scenes? Jesus tells the disciples that they are to preach the gospel of repentance and remission of sins "in his name among

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all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*." Had he not expected them to face the cross, would not he have said, "Begin anywhere but at Jerusalem"? For Jerusalem had not changed its heart overnight. To the people of Jerusalem he was still a crucified criminal. In a word Jerusalem had given its verdict—"Away with this man . . . not this man . . . but Barabbas."

But they obeyed his command. Some one has said, "The quality in Christianity which has given it the strongest appeal to virile characters is that in essence, it is a form of heroism." "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John. . . ." It took just that. Few facts in Christian history are more impressive than this, that in the very city that erected a cross there was established the first Christian church. The very city that was religiously barren became the scene of Pentecost. From the people who crucified him he won his first convert. In short, the scene of Jesus' greatest failure became the occasion of his greatest triumph—Jerusalem.

Do not run away from Jerusalem, my friends. Face it. To flee is to fail. To fight is to win. It is a fact that we can and do win our greatest victories where we fight our hardest battles. Courage and triumphant faith can make beautiful and fruitful those very areas of our experience that seem most hard and desolate.

In the light of what we have found true in the life both of Jesus and of his disciples we cannot escape the question, is the modern church facing its Jerusalem? Can we meet the demands of redemptive love?

We have spoken in a previous sermon of the command of Jesus to go into all the world with the gospel of redemption. But we cannot forget his other command—"beginning at Jerusalem." For Jerusalem is still strategic. It is the place of influence and of power. It is the place where religion is outwardly professed but not inwardly possessed. It is the place where we open our Congress with prayer,

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and inscribe the name of God upon our coins, and put the Bible in our court-rooms, and spend millions to erect beautiful edifices of worship, but which behind the outward symbols of religion too often hides a pagan heart. It is the place of pride but not of penitence.

The insight of Jesus here is too striking to be missed. What he is telling us is that before the Gospel can be effective, quantitatively, it must be qualitatively real. It must have depth before it can have breadth. If we would lengthen our cords we must strengthen our stakes. In Jerusalem the work of the disciples would not be extensive, but intensive. Their success would be measured not so much by the new ground they had gained as by the new quality of life they could release. Could they break into Jerusalem's inner life, affect its thinking and its practices, and change its ideals? Gains here would not be spectacular. They would not feed the fires of our statistical mania. But after all, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It still remains true that "the things that are not seen are eternal."

For can there be any doubt that the greatest obstacle to the cause of Christ is still to be found in Jerusalem? Is there any greater handicap to the world program of Jesus than the quality of life in Jerusalem? As Dr. Fosdick truly observes, "The impact of our Western civilization in the Orient will be the ultimate factor in determining the fate of Christianity in the non-Christian world." Notice, not the impact of our missionaries, but the impact of our civilization; not the impact of mere preaching, but of the life behind the preaching. "If your people in India, in Britain, or in America were like your book, you would conquer India in five years," said an Indian Brahman. The fearful discrepancy between the gospel we preach abroad and practice at home is too great to be reconciled. We preach brotherhood and lynch negroes. We preach peace and increase our military budgets. We preach liberty of con-

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science and deny the right of citizenship to those who claim it. We preach a gospel that has broken down the middle wall of partition, and our Congress, impelled by racial pride, passes a Japanese Exclusion Act which in the words of one of our missionary leaders, "leaves us no ground on which to stand. They [the Japanese] say to us, 'Physician heal thyself.'" Said a Japanese student some time ago, "Whom do you think needs to be taught Christian ethics, Japanese boys or American Congressmen?"

Therein lies the challenge to the church. Can the church really bring its redemptive gospel to bear effectively upon the life of Jerusalem? If it does, one or two things seem evident.

It is true, I think, that every great revival of religion begins with the church. ". . . Judgment must begin at the house of God. . . ." The evangelical revival that affected the life of England and of the world began there. Whitefield and Wesley, one within, the other without the established church, challenged the church to look beyond her fastidiousness and formality and to find again the purpose and power of her gospel. Their first task, we are told, was to rescue religion from the palsied hands of an institution moribund with respectability and complacency, and cursed with academic irrelevance.

Thus must it ever be. We shall not affect Jerusalem merely by founding more churches. We may need more churches, but that is not our primary need. Our first need is churches that are more Christian. It is not the size of the church that makes it the light of the world, but the quality of its life. Too often our religion is like a vaccination that does not take. It touches the surface, but does not get into the blood stream. If the church does not believe its own gospel, how can it expect the world to heed it?

The proof of the sincerity of our belief will be seen in our ability to meet the demands of redemptive love. This calls for an act, a deed. Preaching alone will not affect

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Jerusalem. It will not do to preach peace and then, when war is declared, fall in line. It is not enough to preach brotherhood and fold our cloaks about us in self-righteous pride.

Can it be that we are avoiding Jerusalem because we have lost the capacity for sacrifice? I think not. We thought we had all become soft, cowardly, weak, anemic, and then a war came, and we rose to unpredicted heights of heroism and devotion. It is not that we are losing the capacity for sacrifice; it is something far more subtle and distressing. It is that we are losing, or lack, that moral discrimination that reveals the things worthy of sacrifice. Something is woefully wrong with the thinking of a nation or of a world that willingly sacrifices millions of men for war and is reluctant about sacrificing battleships for peace! We have erected millions of white crosses to war. How many to peace? God knows humanity has paid the price time and time again in blood and tears, but our Calvarys are not redemptive, because they are not constructive. We are on the wrong track. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

The revelation of Calvary lies not simply in the fact that it shows us one who was willing to pay the price. We, too, seem willing to pay the price. But what are we paying the price for? Calvary reveals the only values worth purchasing. Calvary is not simply an example of courage. Infinitely more! It is courage illumined and immortalized by moral discrimination and spiritual insight. It is the lack of this insight that makes our sacrifice unavailing. We sacrifice to perpetuate unbrotherliness; he sacrificed that brotherhood might be born. We die for hate. He died for love. We die to gain. He died to give. The result is that our Calvarys enfold us in still greater darkness, while from his cross shines the light of the dawn. Strange that we allow ourselves to be emotionally stirred over the fact of

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Jesus' death and yet seem to be so totally indifferent to the values for which he died!

We shall be redeemed when we really begin to live for the things for which Jesus died, and die for the things for which he lived. When we are really mastered by the things that mastered him we, too, shall be aware of that fellowship through which we receive power to become the sons of God. "And this is the everlasting splendor of the cross, this spectacle of a love that would not let go of man, and of a faith that would not let go of God."

Studdert-Kennedy gives us this beautiful prayer:

"Bread of Thy Body give me for my fighting,
Give me to drink Thy Sacred Blood for wine,
While there are wrongs that need me for the righting,
While there is warfare splendid and divine.

"Give me, for light, the sunshine of Thy sorrow,
Give me for shelter the shadow of Thy Cross,
Give me to share the glory of Thy morrow,
Gone from my heart the bitterness of Loss."¹

He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.
And he went.

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“Son of Man, whenever I doubt of life, I think of Thee. Nothing is so impossible as that Thou shouldst be dead. I can imagine the hills to dissolve in vapour, and the stars to melt in smoke, and the rivers to empty themselves in sheer exhaustion, but I feel no limit in Thee. Thou never growest old to me. Last century is old, last year is old, last season is an obsolete fashion, but Thou are not obsolete. Thou are abreast of all the centuries, nay, Thou goest before them like the star. I have never come up with Thee, modern as I am.”

—GEORGE MATHESON.

X

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”

—*John* xiv:19.

Jesus went to Jerusalem, and there he died. With his death darkness fell upon the little group of followers who had trusted that it was he who should redeem Israel. But was death to be the last word? That Jesus never viewed it in terms of finality, but saw dawn beyond the darkness, is evidenced by the words to which we turn: “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”

Let us assure ourselves at the outset that the question that Jesus was seeking to answer for his disciples in this statement was no theoretical one. This was something that they needed desperately to know. They had observed the storm gathering about him, and knew that it would break. But what after the storm—shipwreck or port? Bits of flotsam and jetsam upon the troubled waters, mute reminders of a heroic battle, or victory? That was the question. Whatever may be said about a possible future life, it simply cannot be said that this is a question that need not concern us. We may leave to Professor Einstein and those who are intellectually or scientifically equipped the problem of relativity. Very well might the average man say: “Well, what’s the difference? Let scientists worry about that.” But not so the question of immortality. Many of us profess to be quite indifferent to this question. But as a matter of fact we are merely fooling ourselves. For there

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are some things in life that are so basic and vital that, although a man may postpone making up his mind about them, he cannot postpone making up his life about them. We may ignore them, but they will not ignore us.

Here is an architect, for example, who is building a tabernacle in which some evangelistic meetings are to be held. He may say that he is not theoretically concerned as to whether or not the building will stand after the special meetings are over. It is evident, however, that his knowledge of the fact that he is building a temporary structure only, has a practical bearing on the way he builds it. The thing is thrown together. The materials are cheap. There is no attempt to make it architecturally impressive or beautiful. But that is not the way an architect builds a cathedral. If you know that you are working on a Lincoln Memorial you build it one way. If you are merely putting up a tent to house a circus, that is another matter. "We do not build magnificently for mice!" says Emerson.

It is even so with reference to this question. I do not think we can permanently escape its practical bearing upon our lives. To be sure, there are stoical souls who profess to be quite unconcerned about the final outcome. The values of personality may be of no more ultimate worth than rubbish fit for the attic, still we are bound zealously to guard these values as long as they remain on the ground floor. We shall make the best of a bad bargain. We shall be good sports. One cannot help but admire this spirit, and yet there is something unwholesome about it, even as there is about cynicism. The Stoic tries to rally us to the support of values which he believes must be conserved in spite of the universe, rather than because of it. The cynic frankly admits that the effort is vain, the game not worth the candle, and so ridicules the effort. To be sure, if we must choose we shall stand with the Stoic—but how long shall we stand? Sooner or later "life is poisoned by the conviction that all is vanity." I repeat, therefore, that this is not

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a theoretical problem. Consciously or unconsciously most of us, as normal human beings, either live as if life were a passing show, or as if our personalities were of eternal consequence. Our philosophy either is, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," or, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." It makes a tremendous difference which view we take.

It is, indeed, an arresting fact that Jesus should have said that some would see him after his death, while others would not. "The world seeth me no more, but ye see me." The world would always think of him as dead, while the disciples would know he was alive. The world saw him as long as in bodily form he walked the streets, sailed on the lake, preached from the mountain top. But after his lifeless body would be placed in a tomb out of sight, then he would be out of mind. The world would see him no more.

Of course the world would see him no more, because as a matter of fact the world had never seen him at all. To the world Christ was no different from the two thieves between whom he was crucified. The splendor of his personality quite escaped the world. The world had spurned his ideals, ridiculed his hopes, and betrayed his love. And if the world could not see him while he lived, what hope was there that it would see him after he had gone? If the flowering tree robed in the new green of May meets no answering response from our hearts, what hope is there that its beauty will haunt us when the frost has struck it and its bloom is shed? Could this be the meaning of those cryptic words of Jesus, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The world would see him no more, because it had never seen him in the first place.

"But you will see me," as Professor Moffatt translates it. And if the disciples would see him after his death it was because they had really seen him before. His spirit had quickened them. His faith had ennobled them. His love had

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conquered them. And having seen and prized the treasure of his personality, they were convinced that the destruction of the earthen vessel would not annihilate the treasure. Their insight was that it was not possible for him to be holden by death. This was because they had discovered the spiritual "Power, greater than all the world, that was with Jesus," to use Herman's expression. The truth of these observations lies in the fact that there is no record of any of Jesus' appearances, whether those appearances be physical or spiritual, save to souls that were prepared for the view. As Martineau puts it, "We may be sure that if there were a cynic or a Sadducee, or even an indifferent stranger, mixed up with the five hundred brethren at once on the Galilean mountain, the vision could not come to him." It was to the little group of people who believed in him before he died that the supreme revelation came which brought assurance that death had no dominion over him.

If we seem to be stressing this thought today it is because it is absolutely basic in our views of the resurrection. This conviction of the resurrection is simply not an artificial or arbitrary blanket command issued to us from above; it is rather a most natural and insistent demand made by those who sense "the beyond that is within." We are not compelled by it; we are impelled by it. We demand it of life when we discover and experience here and now values that are priceless. The feeling that such values perish is revolting and intolerable. If the disciples were convinced, as they most assuredly were, that death did not destroy Jesus, it was because they had discovered in him something over which death had no dominion, and

" . . . felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness."

In their opinion no more could death destroy him than could breaking up a violin destroy the creative power of a musician. But if the world does not share this insight,

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then for the world he is dead, but for those who see this, he is alive for evermore.

To say this is certainly not to say that the resurrection of Jesus is not an objective fact, but it is to say that some objective facts become real to us only when we are qualified subjectively to apprehend them, and respond to them. Jesus was constantly speaking of people who had eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear. The fact that a blind man cannot see the sunlight certainly does not make the sunlight an illusion. And the fact that some lack the capacity to appreciate great music or great art certainly would not lead us to disband our orchestras or padlock our museums. There are some things upon which our judgments cannot be trusted until we are qualified to make them.

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." But if the world saw him no more it was not because there was nothing to see, but rather because the world had no eyes to see it. The question that we might well put to ourselves this morning, therefore, is, "Do we see him?" Is the resurrection for us simply an historical event that occurred many hundred years ago in a tomb in Joseph's garden, or is it a present experience that fills our own lives? Is he risen for us?

"To me that story—ay, that Life and Death
Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it is:
—Is, here and now."

Let me suggest one of two conditions which I think are indispensable for those who do see him.

It has occurred to me that the way to see that certain things are true is to realize first that they are necessary. Necessity is not only the mother of invention; it also makes probable and even certain some things which might otherwise seem to be barest possibilities. Some people no doubt question the reality of the resurrection because it seems to

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them to be a kind of stunt. God temporarily filled the rôle of a cosmic magician, and rescued Jesus from the grave. If that is the way we regard it, its reality will forever escape us. The resurrection will become convincing when we realize that it was a moral necessity. It was not the character of Jesus, but the character of the universe that was at stake. If the resurrection of Jesus is regarded by us as an impossible "stunt," it is because we have dragged it up, like a tree, out of its soil. It is only as we are made aware of the kind of soil in which the cross stood, that Easter morning loses somewhat its miraculous impression and becomes a stern moral necessity. As Richard Roberts beautifully expresses it, "You are not in a position to pass judgment upon the credibility of the Resurrection story until you have begun to 'sense' the spiritual miracle of the Cross." To those who see nothing unusual in Calvary, the resurrection will seem an unusual, incredible sort of thing. But to those who "sense" and in some measure share the insight and the sacrifice of the cross, the resurrection is precisely what we should have a right to expect. It is no longer a stunt, but a moral necessity. If the final answer of this universe to the life of Jesus is a crude cross and a tomb dark and cold, then there is no escaping the conclusion that we are living in a universe that is issuing blank checks, and is morally bankrupt.

You see, this belief is not something imposed upon a group of reluctant mortals. It is something that springs spontaneously out of our very innate sense of decency, justice, and honor. The resurrection of Jesus is precisely what one would expect from a universe that is morally solvent. And our expectation is based on what Von Hugel calls our "intimations of necessity."

When Napoleon was exiled he is reported to have said to one of his companions: "Tell me, Bertrand, how you account for the great abyss between my misery and the eternal reign of Jesus. I am forgotten: so it is with Cæsar.

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and Alexander. Our exploits are given to pupils in school who sit in judgment upon us, but behold the destiny of the Christ! His kingdom extends over the whole earth; and there are millions who would die for him." But Napoleon need not have asked the question at all. If we had heard that he was risen from the dead, we should be inclined to feel as if the universe had played a mean and altogether unnecessary trick upon us. For if the things for which he and his kind stand are the ultimate things of life, then there is nothing more to be said. It is bad enough to have to endure such things for threescore years and ten, let alone desire to perpetuate them! No one would want to perpetuate such ideals, for the simple reason that they are not worth perpetuating. But when a man senses the "spiritual miracle of the cross," when he sees all that he considers most beautiful and valuable being done to death by all that he considers most base and worthless, then to feel that that is the end of the story is, indeed, to violate the deepest instincts of his own soul. As Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross puts it, "The mind will not tolerate a schism between goodness and being."

You see, therefore, that it is these "intimations of necessity" that make the resurrection a reality. Life demands it. Think of the multitude of lives on this earth that have been frustrated. They have never had a chance. They deserve the best but receive the worst. Can it be that frustration is the final word for them? Or what shall we say, on the other hand, of those lives rich in the values we admire, to whom the coming of death seems a sacrilege? Can it be that oblivion is the final word for them? The result is that "we crave immortality when life means little, and we crave it more when it means much." To say that this craving is just an expression of our egotism is to beg the question, and to sail many sea miles from the truth. For in plain truth man's ethical idealism and moral aspiration can no more be laid to his conceit than can his biological inherit-

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ance or, for that matter, his consciousness itself, be attributed to his stupidity. He invented one no more than he did the other. If, therefore, his moral expectations are groundless, we cannot escape the conclusion that "the universe only adds insult to injury if it makes the individual mortal contribute to accumulating irrationality."

Moreover, if the resurrection of Jesus is to be real to us, we must in the second place share in his moral adventure. It is as we become sharers in the "spiritual miracle of the cross" that Christ once more journeys with us.

It is always in those who share in the moral adventure that we see again the risen Christ. Stanley said that he knew there was a Christ, because he knew David Livingstone. The truth of his resurrection is verified by those who live for the values for which he died, and die for the values for which he lived. We see him in the first century, not in Nero, a symbol of material pomp and power, but in Paul. We see him in the fifteenth century, not in the political expediencies and sophistries of Florence, but in a humble friar, Savonarola, marching triumphantly to his cross. We see him in the sixteenth century, not in a church glorying in its lust for power, but in a monk, Luther, who braves the unknown. We see him today, not in those who plead for bigger navies, who are slaves to the superficial standards of life, who live in selfish ease, moral inertia, and spiritual indifference, but in those courageous souls who refuse to sacrifice truth for success, honesty for results, or social good for personal gain. Whenever we become sharers in the miracle of the cross, the tomb once more is empty and the miracle of the resurrection is again enacted.

It may seem to some of you as if we have been speaking merely of the conservation of values in the abstract and have said nothing of the conservation of personality. This, however, is implied, for I cannot conceive of values save as they are incarnate in personality.

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There are many people, to be sure, who, while they do not believe in personal immortality, are inspired by the fact that the torch which falls from their failing hands will be caught and lifted high by others who survive. Abraham Lincoln is dead. Quite. But he is more alive today than the night he occupied the box in Ford's Theater. His unadorned simplicity, honesty, and humaneness have unquestionably enriched our lives, and will continue to do so. So some of us profess to be content that he and others like him will—

“Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion even more intense.”

It is by such thoughts that we are made content to—

“. . . join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence.”

No one would belittle such a result. But surely immortality is hardly the right word to apply to the social influences of our personalities. For as a matter of fact, the race is no more immortal than the individual. If a flower does not escape the frost, no more does the garden.

It is evident, therefore, that a universe which disappoints the individual does not satisfy the race. It must have been a frank facing of this fact that led Darwin to say, “It is an intolerable thought that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress.” To speak, therefore, of our individual survival of death is surely not to voice merely a selfish thought; it is equally, indeed more so, to express social concern, for here both the individual and the group share and share alike.

It is said that Phillips Brooks used to bring his vesper services to a close in darkness. As the shadows gathered, the faces in his congregation became blurred and finally

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indistinguishable. But by that very token it seemed as if the common needs of humanity were showing through each countenance. Even so, as the shadows of death gather about us, there is but one common need, at once personal and social, that all our faces express. It is the need for life. The eye of faith sees a light in the darkness. It comes from One who has brought life and immortality to light. Our faith that the final victory lies not with the grave, but with personality, is immeasurably strengthened by the victory of Christ. His victory becomes prophetic of our own. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "Because I live, ye shall live also." The power of his endless life, vastly more operative in the world today than when clothed in his flesh and blood, lends constant assurance to our faith that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

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